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The  
History of  
Our Shakespeare Club.

By

WILLIAM HARRIS.

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SHAKESPEARE COLLECTION

FROM THE GIFT OF

WALTER WEHLE NAUMBURG

(Class of 1889)

OF NEW YORK

MEAD END,  
MEADOW ROAD,  
EDGBASTON.

July 1904.

Dear Mrs Anderton,

I am sending for your acceptance a copy of "The History of O.S.C." of which little circle Mr Anderton was for so many years a valued member.

Believe me to be,  
Yours faithfully,

*W. H. Allen*

Hon: Sec:



c

The History  
OF  
Our Shakespeare Club.

BY  
WILLIAM HARRIS.

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FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY.

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Birmingham :  
THE "JOURNAL" PRINTING OFFICES, 31, CANNON STREET.

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*Gift of  
W. W. Haumburg  
of  
New York*

## Our Shakespeare Club.

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THE history of Our Shakespeare Club will be interesting to its members in proportion to their remembrance of the ideas which led to its foundation and the extent to which those ideas have been realised. In the life of a great and a growing town where the fortunes not only of individuals but of the community were being formed, and the claim of practical business made constant demands upon the thought and energy of its people, there was an increasing necessity that special provision should be made for the cultivation of their intellectual and artistic faculties. In a great capital, which attracts the active and aspiring minds from every part of the nation, opportunities of the kind are more readily available, but fifty years ago this was by no means the case in smaller places like Birmingham. There had not been wanting even in earlier times very earnest efforts to accomplish the objects in view. The Philosophical Institution, established in 1800 and continued for many years, did much to promote intellectual and especially scientific culture. The Polytechnic Institution was founded on a more popular basis, its aim being to extend the area over which such educational effort should operate. These societies no doubt did a great amount of good, but they failed to secure a permanent existence. It is not necessary to record to



what extent their objects have been more effectually attained by the Midland Institute. Such associations, whatever the amount of their success, did not provide that intimate individual intercourse which is so essential to the freedom, as well as the enjoyment, of the intellectual life.

There was another social condition which existed then to a degree which it is not easy now to fully realise. In a community which might be said to be developing from the village to the city, all the members of any social class were known to each other, and their opinions, or at least the expressions of them, were more or less subject to the criticism or even the control of certain schools of philosophical, or, rather, of theological thought, and their acknowledged leaders. It is difficult now to realise how far and with what persistence this influence prevailed, not only in Birmingham, but generally throughout the country. There can be no doubt that these two subjects—the defence of freedom of thought and speech, and the promotion of intellectual intercourse in the town—were more or less consciously the actuating impulses in the minds of the two men who may fairly be called the founders of the Club.

George Dawson throughout the whole of his active and strenuous life was an acknowledged leader in the movement on behalf of complete freedom of thought and speech. He pursued this object as a popular lecturer, not in Birmingham only, but in all parts of the country. The subjects of his addresses varied; they were at times literary, social, or political, but whatever the theme there was always the strain of a desire not only to enlarge the intellectual outlook of his hearers but to encourage their desire for unrestricted enquiry. Without entering upon any discussion of the basis which he proposed for a

Christian Church, and the principles which should form the bond of union of its members, it may at least be said that his protest against the dominance of any theological creed or ecclesiastical formulary was in keeping with the whole tenour of his teaching. The principles which he professed he carried out in his own conduct. Although regarded by many of his friends and associates with an admiration amounting to reverence, no one met with any difficulty in expressing opinions whether in agreement with or in opposition to his own. This true catholicity of spirit was manifested in all his relations with our Shakespeare Club alike in the part he took in its foundation and in his conduct of the proceedings as its President. The oldest members will be the best qualified to affirm that there has never been the least impediment to, or restriction of, that absolute frankness and truthfulness of expression which is the quality which alone can give real value to human intercourse.

Samuel Timmins was an example of the manner in which originality of character and persistence of purpose can rise superior to what might well be regarded as unfavourable circumstances. The son of a Birmingham manufacturer at a time when industrial enterprises were carried on in far more moderate proportions than those with which we have more recently become acquainted, he began life amid surroundings in which the idea that there could be any relation between business occupations and literary culture was not recognised. It was thought that time given to such studies was diverted from its proper channels. It was almost by stealth that he made himself acquainted with the treasures of that literature of which he ultimately became so complete a master, and in some branches so competent a critic. In Shakespearean studies, especially, his capacity was acknowledged beyond

even the boundaries of his own country. Students and critics from Germany and America, visiting England, found in a small warehouse in a back street in Birmingham a man whom they recognised as their equal in exegesis as well as in store of information. It was not only with the difficulties in pursuing his studies that he had to contend. This mental progress, accompanied, as of course it was, by the desire for free development, was checked by the restrictions to which allusion has been made. Brought up in the strictest sect of Orthodox Nonconformists, and under one of the most dogmatic and peremptory of its leaders, it was not without long and painful efforts that he overcame the obstructions which he had to encounter. It may be readily understood how much he was attracted by the teaching of George Dawson with whom as a pupil and a friend he formed a life-long association.

In speaking of the founders of Our Shakespeare Club, it is not to be understood that its formation was altogether unprecedented. It had indeed been preceded, and it may be said prepared for, by a society similar in character and aims, though perhaps less formal and regular in its organisation, called "The Crown Club." Indeed, so many of the members of the older club were on the roll of the new one that the latter might be regarded as an extension rather than as a new creation. Another antecedent of our Club, to which it owes perhaps its name, and certainly something of its character, was a series of meetings held to celebrate the anniversaries of Shakespeare's birthday. These for several years had been called, without any regular authorisation, by Dawson, Timmins, and some other friends, and had served to bring together the lovers of literature in the town. Almost invariably the chair was taken by Dawson, who

delivered a series of addresses on various aspects and manifestations of the genius of Shakespeare, which were exceedingly interesting and valuable. After the formation of the Club these anniversaries were called and arranged in its name. They were continued for many years with varying success. The culminating celebration was that at the Tercentenary in 1864, of which an account will be given in its place. The interest thus excited continued for some time, but gradually it relaxed, and the meetings ceased to be held.

On the formation of the Club Dawson became President, and Timmins Honorary Secretary. If any other formal business was transacted, no record of it remains. It seems probable, indeed, that for some time no minutes were regularly kept;—for if they were they have not been preserved—and that nothing was done except to fix from time to time the place of meeting, and to commence a long and mirthful discussion as to the name of the Club. There is something like the haze of pre-historic tradition about these very earliest proceedings, in which even the very date of the establishment of the Club is shrouded, but there is a general, if vague, idea that the year 1860 was the important period. The mist rises somewhat, though not completely, in 1862, when it was known that five meetings were held, and it is supposed that fifteen members attended. There is a doubt, however, as to the strict historical accuracy of this account, for the number of members was then twenty-two, and it is not likely that so many as seven were absent from every meeting. At the meeting in November it was resolved that “Twenty-five carte-de-visite portraits of himself should be sent by each member to the Honorary Secretary to be made up by him into sets and a set sent to each member.” This was done, and the collections

that exist are exceedingly interesting, containing, as they do, early portraits of men, some of whom have made their mark not only in local but in national affairs, and some who, alas, are no longer with us. At a later period another series of portraits was taken, this time of a cabinet size, and these, too, form a group of almost a family character since they are the presentments of companions of whom it may be said that their mutual friendship closely resembles personal affection.

The proceedings of the year 1863 were exceedingly interesting, not only to the Club but to the town, for they included the formulation of a scheme for the establishment of the Shakespeare Library, an institution of which either from a literary or municipal point of view it is impossible to speak too highly. Public attention was first called to the subject by letter from the President of the Club, which was dated April 15th, 1861, and was published in the *Birmingham Gazette*.

#### PROPOSALS FOR A SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY.

The near approach of the anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday reminds me to claim from you the fulfilment of a promise to give me space enough to propose a favourite plan of mine, and to ask the help in carrying it out of those who may agree with me in its desirableness. I want to see founded in Birmingham a Shakespeare Library, which should contain (as far as practicable) every edition and every translation of Shakespeare; all the commentators, good, bad, and indifferent; in short, every book connected with the life or works of our great poet. I would add portraits of Shakespeare, and all

the pictures, &c., illustrative of his works. This collection should have a room devoted exclusively to it; a small endowment, and some trustees zealous for its preservation. It might be put under the care of the Council of the Midland Institute, or the Library Committee of the Corporation, or of the Old Library, as may be determined by its founders. I need not set forth the uses of such a Library, nor the fitness of Warwickshire possessing such a collection. My proposal is not addressed to those who need argument on such points. I simply ask communication from those who are willing to join in this work. I will, should such a Library be founded, make over to it the best part of my Shakespearean books.

I am, Sir,

Yours truly,

GEORGE DAWSON.

The Brook House,

Near Bromsgrove,

April 15th, 1861.

Correspondence and discussion took place, but nothing practical was effected until 1863, when in prospect of the coming Tercentenary the Club resolved to take action. At a meeting which was held at the Greswolde Arms, Knowle, on the 13th June in that year, it was resolved that "Dawson, Timmins, Bunce, Evans, J. H. Chamberlain, Ingleby, and Johnson do form a Committee to arrange for the celebration of Shakespeare's birth by the formation and endowment of a Shakespeare Library, to be placed in the Central Reference Library in the care of the borough." The scheme was warmly welcomed, and immediately fifteen members of the Club promised

donations of money or books to the value of Fifty Pounds. The Committee acted with so much celerity that on the 10th July a public meeting was held at the Philosophical Institution, when subscriptions were announced and a large committee formed, to which Samuel Timmins, John Henry Chamberlain, and George Jabet were appointed Honorary Secretaries.

With the formation of this representative public Committee the formal management of the business was taken out of the hands of the Club, but, as its interest continued, a brief record of the proceedings may be properly made. On the 4th of August the Mayor (Charles Sturge) submitted to the Town Council an application for the grant of a room in the Central Library Buildings. This request was referred to the Free Libraries Committee, who reported favourably and submitted the necessary conditions. Preparations were then made for the actual presentation of the books, which took place on the morning of 23rd April, 1864, forming the first part of the Tercentenary Celebrations. The room assigned by the Council for the housing of the Library was situated on the Mezzanine floor of the Central Buildings. It was furnished with fittings specially designed by J. H. Chamberlain, one feature of which was the carving on the bases of the columns the initials of donors to the fund. Unfortunately this room and its contents were destroyed by the fire of 1879, but it fully shared in the renaissance which was effected by the public spirit and munificence of the community. When the restoration was designed a special room leading from the Reference Library was provided and was fitted up in a manner worthy of its objects.

Although the Club was no longer the responsible

manager of the Institution, it still retained the interest in its welfare and progress, which it has manifested by donations of books of which the most notable was a copy of the Second Folio Shakespeare (1632), which was procured by Timmins for the sum of £20, and forms an important item in the Catalogue. The collection now is a wonderfully extensive and valuable one, and is added to year by year.

The year 1864 furnished what is in many respects the most interesting item in the annals of the Club, since it witnessed that Tercentenary Celebration which had been looked forward to with so much interest and prepared for with so much care. The proceedings were marked by a success so complete as to repay all the labour which had been bestowed upon them and to leave a pleasant memory in the minds of all who took part in them.

They commenced with the Soirée given by the Club, which was fixed for the 22nd April so that it might not clash with the more national celebrations which were to be held at Stratford-on-Avon on the birthday itself. For this interesting function long preparations had been made. Special cards of invitation and an illustrated programme and an ornamental badge for the members of the Club had been designed by John Henry Chamberlain, and the invitations were sent to representatives of all the local educational, literary, artistic, and scientific institutions of the town, to the leading officials, and to a wide circle of ladies and gentlemen who were known to be interested in intellectual pursuits. The arrangements made in the rooms, and the general effect of the proceedings, and of the success by which they were attended were described in the *Birmingham Daily Post* of the following day. It is, perhaps, better that this description, being



made by an unofficial writer, should be given rather than any account furnished by a member of the Club.

“The first of the series of tercentenary celebrations in Birmingham took place last evening at Nock’s Royal Hotel, when, on the invitation of the Shakespeare Club, about two hundred and fifty ladies and gentlemen assembled at one of the most successful soirées that has, within our recollection, been given in Birmingham. The room had been very tastefully decorated with special reference to the entertainment. At the upper end the orchestra—usually bare and dingy to ugliness—had been converted into an elegant stage, fronted with a proscenium in the shape of an arch, the upper corners of which were pierced with open fretwork. Round the proscenium ran an elegant design, which, together with the rest of the construction, was pricked out in admirably-chosen colours. The floor or steps of the orchestra were covered with scarlet cloth, and on the highest step was erected a light and elegant shrine, in white and gold. On a panel in front of the shrine was the monogram “W. S.,” with the figures 1564, the date of Shakespeare’s birth. Within the shrine was placed a copy of the Stratford bust, over the head of which a circle of brilliantly-lighted stars was so arranged as to form a nimbus or “glory.” On one side of the shrine was fixed a remarkably well-painted view of Stratford Church as seen from the Avon. On the other side, corresponding in size arrangement, was a view of Shakespeare’s birthplace—the humble but world-famous house in Henley Street. These pictures were the work of Mr. Leitch, scenic artist at the Prince of Wales Theatre, and to this gentleman, and also to Mr. Swanborough, the

thanks of the Club are due for very valuable assistance. A word of praise should be given to the admirable manner in which the lighting of the bust, the pictures, and of the orchestra generally was managed. As may be inferred from this hasty notice, the decorations were centred in the orchestra; but the other parts of the room had by no means been neglected. At the lower end hung a cartoon designed and painted in colours by Mr. Sebastian Evans, representing Shakespeare surrounded by the principal characters in his plays. This work was greatly and deservedly admired for its graceful conception, skilful grouping, spirited drawing, and admirably-harmonised colour. Round the walls were hung a few oil-paintings lent by Mr. Gillott and other gentlemen, Messrs. Burton's excellent series of Shakespeare photographs, and other appropriate works of a similar class. The windows of the room were suitably draped, and the lower part of each window was decorated with hothouse plants and flowers. Altogether, with its bright colour and appropriate decorations, the comfortably-carpeted room when filled with the invited guests presented a remarkably graceful and brilliant appearance. It is only proper to add that the decorations were designed and superintended by Mr. J. H. Chamberlain, to whom, with Mr. S. Timmins, Mr. Thomas Anderton, and Mr. Sebastian Evans the arrangements of the soirée were entrusted."

The proceedings were opened by the following address by the President:—

The task I have to perform is one which, if it could be as pleasingly done as it was pleasingly conceived, it would be well for the speaker. My duty is to welcome all

present to this entertainment given by the "Shakespeare Club," a club which was probably, until now, unknown to many of you, but which I hope for the future may be sufficiently well known. If, in the entertainment this evening, you find anything faulty, you must consider that it is home-made, and excuse the faults; while, if there is anything pleasing in it, we may take a pride in it as being done by Birmingham people, and, for the most part, by members of the Shakespeare Club. I need not tell you that much of what you have listened to was the production of members of the Club, while in many matters thanks are due to gentlemen who have kindly come from a distance to help us. It may perhaps seem a little presumptuous for the members of a self-elected club to undertake in Birmingham the celebration of the Tercentenary of the birth of Shakespeare, but we have waited for the great people of the town to move in the matter, and they do not. Neither the various learned bodies, nor the clergy, nor the artists, nor the musicians have made any movement whatever towards the celebration of this great event. By what we have done I think we may justify the title we have assumed, and prove our right to the name of the "Shakespeare Club" as having a great deal of reverence and devotion for Shakespeare. For the majority of the Club have taken up this matter in no spirit of play. There are among us men who thank God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon this country, and who feel that England has been granted few blessings greater than the birth of this poet, whose works were so long misunderstood, that the study of them may never be exhausted—whose works are so wonderful that, although the patience of generations has been spent on them, yet for many long years still able men must, with great pains and diligence, study them before they can get at a know-

ledge of all the wonderful depth to which his genius has pierced.

As members of the "Shakespeare Club" we have all one object—to drive off the stage, out of print, out of the shop, and out of the parlour all those detestable, mutilated, and altered versions of Shakespeare which are a disgrace to the nation. A mutilated Shakespeare, a Shakespeare made moral according to the morality of tattlers and tea-drinkers we abhor and despise; and we are resolved to do what in us lies so to set forth his excellencies, and so to criticise his works, and so to get them represented on the proper place for them—the stage—as, by degrees, to turn out all these base, spurious, and foul adulterations, "improvements," and changes which have made our literature disgraceful.

On this night we invite ladies to be present, because for men alone to celebrate the Tercentenary of Shakespeare would be one of the most ungracious, ungrateful, unthankful, and barbarous things possible. If, when he was alive, William Shakespeare had been invited to an entertainment where there were to be no women, he would have been the last to come, and probably the first to go away. For, among the many excellencies of that mighty and unfathomable mind, one of the chief was, if women only knew it thoroughly, that this man was their best friend, because he understood them better than any man who ever lived. We have reason to marvel how he knew all the passions of men, but how he knew all the passions and changes of a woman's heart passes all understanding, and must remain one of the great mysteries which a future world only can clear up. Shakespeare was a man for woman to love. Those who knew him well called him "gentle Shakespeare," and the word "gentle" did not then mean only meek and mild, but had the meaning

which now attaches, when used properly, to the word "gentleman." In this I do not mean the technical gentleman—not the snob of yesterday, made rich, and therefore made great; but the man of fine reverence for the feelings of other people; the man of tender heart and kind spirit; the man who always saw the good and evil of a thing, and who praised the good and excused the evil; the lover of little children, the lover of dogs, the lover of women, the lover of Nature, the lover of wine in moderation, the lover of all the gracious things in life. All this was William Shakespeare, who was the greatest gentleman this country has ever produced. If you doubt this, I would ask where will you find such a book of etiquette, in the greatest sense of the word, as in his plays? And, behind morality, men always need etiquette. It is not enough for a man to keep the Commandments, to be loved. You cannot love a man for paying his debts, or for keeping sober. After morality, we need etiquette, to teach a man the grace of manner, of language, and of life, which must be added to morality, and of which Shakespeare was the greatest master.

He painted women so well that, whoever studies the great women of Shakespeare, studies every grace and charm proper for women to have. Some may say that it is impossible for a man ever to understand women; but against this it may be stated that the two sexes are in this world set to be spies upon each other. Man spies upon woman to find out whether she possesses what to him appears the very crowning-point of excellence, and women soon find out whether men possess the qualities they admire but do not possess. Of whatever quality man has and woman has not, she is a fine judge, and has for it a keen discernment. No woman can paint a woman thoroughly—she can do it partially—but it wants a man

to do it thoroughly, and Shakespeare has done it thoroughly. Beginning with Dame Quickly, he has ascended as high as Cordelia, in whom he depicts all the virtues of womanhood. He knew the universal nature of women, and all their little weaknesses as well as their greatnesses. He was not a gallant man, for gallantry is nothing more than the ghost of a dead chivalry. He was a woman's man, but as for the ladies' man, the miserable mountebank of the ball-room—Shakespeare despised him. He did not call women "goddesses," because he knew that he could not live with a goddess. When a man calls a woman a "goddess," how must he feel when he sees her eating bread and butter? And yet eating bread and butter is not a very wrong thing! In describing women, Shakespeare never gives an auctioneer's catalogue of their charms. Open any book of the time of Shakespeare, and you find women catalogued like pictures, their points set forth as though they were for sale, their love described as being of the earth, earthly; but open his works, and you find he could, without such cataloguing, picture heavenly and noble women among the ordinary beings of this life. There is a time in a young man's life when he wishes that women were immaterial, and that they did not eat so much—when he wishes they might have manna to feed upon, and that they would eat it out of sight. But this is a nonsense they get over in time, and a nonsense Shakespeare never shared in. He never flattered women; he never called them either angels or goddesses; he always called them simply women, and he knew all about them. Every woman who tells the truth must have wished she had had Shakespeare for a lover, since the man who painted Juliet must have understood everything connected with that noble passion. Then, if we mount from these things to Cordelia, we see Cordelia given by God to show

how high a man must rise in the conception of a woman's character, and how it is possible for a woman to arrive almost at saintship on this side the Eternal Rest.

But Shakespeare did not invent these women; they were the noble women of England. He was a learned man, possibly not a graduate, but a learned man; one who knew men, and had read English history well. He had read of Alfred's mother, and how she taught him; he had heard of her of whom it was said—

Hard was the hand that struck the blow,  
Soft were the lips that bled.

He had followed the history of Woodstock, and knew all that sad side of human life. He had heard the noble story of Margaret Roper, who, when her father was beheaded, with much prayer got the dissevered head, which she took with her home and kept until she died. When she went to her last rest, she ordered the head of her martyred father to be laid upon her bosom. Death came to see that sight, and the great conqueror must have then felt that love could outlive corruption, and was stronger than death.

These, then, are the reasons why women should love Shakespeare much: that he was such a gentleman, that he did so well understand all woman's excellencies, that he so raised the ideal of what woman ought to be, and that he so much contributed to the slow effort which the wise men who love women have in all ages made to elevate them from the degeneration to which they had been put by unwise and brutal men in old times. For these things woman's heart ought to kindle in loving gratitude toward this true gentleman, this man who loved women so well, and understood them so thoroughly—the great Bard of Stratford.

As I have said before, it would have been ungracious in the extreme to sit down and celebrate Shakespeare and to forget the women. What would have been Lear without Cordelia, Romeo without Juliet, Benedict without Beatrice? Take away from Shakespeare the women, and you leave much, but you have taken away the greatest and most glowing grace. I think you have done right, therefore, in inviting the ladies here to-night; the members of the Club are glad of the idea, and in the name of the Club I have to thank those who are present for accepting the invitation.

I now come to two pleasing duties—one is to stop talking, and the other to call upon Mr. Phelps, who with great kindness and great labour has come down this evening to give us a reading of the first part of one of the most glorious of the plays Shakespeare wrote—*The Tempest*. Whatever may be the prejudice of individuals against the stage, the Club does not share it, and if they do not like the stage they can go away and read the play at home. I am happy to introduce to you Mr. Phelps, whom many of you know well. He is one of the truest-hearted, ablest, and most zealous members of that noble profession, the play-actor; a profession which has never sunk into disgrace, except when Shakespeare is neglected for the rant, balderdash, and licentiousness of an age which never understood his greatness, when scurrility was preferred to wit, and ribaldry to true nobleness.

Following this address came the performance of an original Cantata, of which the words were written by Sebastian Evans and the music composed by Thomas Anderton, and it may be fairly said that the Club had reason to be highly gratified that a work so admirable should have been produced by two of its members.



This was followed by the reading of the First Act of *The Tempest* by Mr. Phelps, the eminent tragedian, who had very kindly arranged to come down from London for the purpose. The dramatic art which characterised this reading elicited the warmest admiration, and at its close Mr. Dawson explained that the Club were about to ask Mr. Phelps' acceptance in the name of the company of a little specimen of Birmingham manufacture. Manufacturers present need not prick up their ears, as it was nothing either in brass or electro-plate, but nevertheless a piece of Birmingham manufacture. It was a book printed in Birmingham, and as well printed as any book ever was printed; it was a book edited in Birmingham by a member of the Club; and as well edited as any book ever was. It was "*The Devonshire Hamlets*," edited by Mr. Samuel Timmins, and printed by Mr. Josiah Allen, jun., and lest in the multiplicity of presents that Mr. Phelps would no doubt receive during this Tercentenary year, he should forget where this particular little present came from, an inscription had been put on the book testifying that it was presented to him as a slight token of the sense entertained of the very gracious service which, at much inconvenience to himself, Mr. Phelps had rendered to the Shakespeare Club and to the company then assembled.

A selection of Shakespeare songs brought to a close a very memorable celebration.\*

On the following day, the birthday itself, there took place the formal presentation of the books of the Shakespeare Library to the Corporation. For this occasion the Mayor (William Holliday, Esq.), gave a public breakfast, at which, besides the donors to the Library Fund, he entertained a large number of the Magistrates, the Council, and other influential inhabitants of the town. The

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\*The formal Programme and the words of the Cantata are given as an Appendix.

address from the Organising Committee by which the gift was accompanied was as follows:—

“In pursuance of the course adopted during the last summer by those persons who were anxious to do honour to the memory of Shakespeare, in the most fitting manner, by founding a Shakespeare Memorial Library in Birmingham—a Library which, in itself monumental, should contain each edition of Shakespeare’s works, and, as far as it might be possible, include the whole range of Shakespearean literature, the committee appointed to carry this purpose into effect avail themselves of this, the Tercentenary of the birthday of the poet, to present to the Corporation of Birmingham the works which have been given and purchased for the Library up to the present time; a list whereof, with the names of the donors, is hereto appended. In addition to the works given, a sum of money, amounting at present to about £450, has been subscribed, and from time to time, as occasion offers, will be expended by the Shakespeare Memorial Library Committee in the purchase of books to be added to the Library, or in such other manner as may seem to them desirable in carrying out the original intention of the founders.

It may be desirable to embody in this presentation the terms on which the Committee, acting on behalf of the donors and subscribers, propose to give the collection of books to the Corporation, which terms, it is understood, have been accepted and agreed to by the Council of the borough.

1. That a room be specially appropriated for the deposit of the books.
2. That such Library be placed under the same regulations as the Free Reference Library.

3. That such Library be maintained and augmented by the Free Library Committee, all works of the same class purchased by them, or by the Shakespeare Memorial Library Committee, to be placed and arranged in the Shakespeare Memorial Library.
4. That such Library be called "The Shakespeare Memorial Library."
5. That the room in which such Library is placed be exclusively appropriated for the purposes thereof.

The Committee feel impressed with the conviction that, in thus celebrating the three hundredth birthday of the man who combined the most profound knowledge of the human heart with the mightiest power of portraying its workings; of the man who added to the most vivid imagination of the poet the most minute observation of Nature, and who, by virtue of this wonderful combination, has perfected works teeming with delight and instruction to mankind, they have laid the foundation of no temporary or ephemeral work, but have begun to found an institution which, by combining in one spot the numerous editions of the poet's works and the literature which has sprung from this fruitful source, will draw to it for many succeeding generations all students of Shakespeare—an ever-increasing band—from all parts of the world.

It is the strength of this conviction which has determined the Committee to associate this Memorial Library with the Birmingham Corporation, feeling assured that, while the town of Birmingham continues to exist, it will be a pride and a pleasure to the Council of the borough to maintain, support, and increase the Shakespeare Memorial Library.

To you, then, as representatives of the borough of Birmingham, we now present the books already collected, requesting your acceptance thereof on behalf of the town."

To the foregoing address the Mayor replied in the following terms, which he thought did not exaggerate the value of the gift or the generous exertions and intentions of the donors:—

"Gentlemen,—On behalf of the Corporation, and in the name of the town of Birmingham, I accept with cordial thanks this munificent proof of your goodwill to your fellow-citizens. Your gift will, I am sure, be welcomed by all, not only on account of its intrinsic value, or because it is prompted by such a considerate and intelligent sympathy with the intellectual wants of this town, but also because it is an evidence that we have among us a confederation of scholars and thinkers in whom the pursuit of Literature is at once the cause and the effect of manly and liberal sentiment, and of a generous zeal for extending to others that which has proved a delight and an ornament to themselves.

That the propriety of the occasion might be a still further commendation of your gift, you have presented it on that day on which every Englishman has a right to feel more than usually proud of his country—a day on which, throughout the length and breadth of this land, every man who has the slightest tincture of education feels his heart beat higher within him when he remembers that he is the countryman of William Shakespeare.

Of the many ways in which men have proposed to celebrate this day, it seems to me that this one which you have originated is the most rational and the most expressive of those feelings which this great anniversary inspires; for you do not seek to immortalise one whose immortality was achieved long before we were born, nor

have you sought to describe or to extol in words that universal genius whose excellence eclipses all praise and "beggars all description;" but you have put into our hands the means of entering still more deeply into that inexhaustible treasury of thought and observation, of wit and fancy, of tenderness and grandeur; and not only so, but you have enabled us to make a yet larger number to participate in this intellectual heritage. Gentlemen, the municipal body, who are the guardians of the peace and welfare of this town, have had their duty set before them this day in its noblest and most genial aspect, for they are reminded that it is their duty to encourage everything which can tend to refine the taste, to enlarge the conceptions, and to exalt the aims of the working classes. As for myself, gentlemen, I beg you to believe that I shall ever hold it a great honour and privilege to have presided on such an occasion as the present, and I shall continue to remember with pleasure that my year of office was associated with the name of Shakespeare and with the good work which you have performed in his honour."

These memorable celebrations terminated by the Anniversary Dinner, held in the evening of the 23rd. The meeting was on this occasion larger than usual, about 250 persons being present.

Dawson from the chair proposed the usual toast of "The Immortal Memory of Shakespeare," to which was appended on the toast list the couplet from Richard III.:

Death makes no conquest of this Conqueror,  
For now he lives in fame though not in life.

With no more suitable words could the account of these interesting events be closed.

Returning to what may be called the domestic history of the Club, this year (1863) witnessed one event which has to be recorded. Hitherto the Club had enacted no

definite laws, rules, or regulation. It may be supposed that the little society was too orderly and discreet to require any such outward bonds or restrictions. Whether there were any symptoms of too much vivacity manifested, or that the members thought that the dignity of their institution demanded some form of constitutional government need not be considered; anyway, at the meeting on the 14th of November a formal code was enacted, expressed as follows, not perhaps in such precisely legal terms as might have been expected from a body which numbered amongst its members several eminent solicitors:—

1. Name, "Our Shakespeare Club."
2. Two classes of members, resident and non-resident.
3. Every member as soon as elected to supply 25 carte-de-visite portraits of himself to Hon. Sec.
4. Every resident member when absent to be fined half-a-crown.
5. No member to be elected unless nominated at one meeting and proposed and seconded at the next, and then, if no objection be made on the part of any member, such person shall be considered elected and invited to join the Club.
6. Any member may introduce a visitor residing more than twenty miles from Birmingham to any meeting of the Club.
7. The President and Hon. Sec. to arrange all the meetings of the Club.
8. Any member leaving the town shall be considered to have left the Club unless invited to continue a member by special resolution of the Club.
9. That if a member of the Club be absent from the whole of the Winter Meetings, the Hon. Sec. shall write to him a letter directing his attention to

the fact, and requesting to be informed whether or not he wishes to continue a member of the Club.

10. That the President or Chairman for the time being at any meeting of this Club shall have a casting vote, in addition to his ordinary vote as a member of the Club.

The long debate as to the name was thus closed, thanks, perhaps, to the increasing interest excited by the coming Tercentenary celebration. As to the other laws, it must be remembered that the tide of reform must flow in small creeks as in large bays, and amendments, or at least alterations, were occasionally made. One law has been absolutely repealed, and changes in the financial arrangements have been made which are subsequently described.

It will be seen that the Laws made no mention either of times or place of meeting, or of any terms of subscription, the only financial provision being that with regard to fines, which was not itself very long lived. The original—it might be called the traditional—practice up to this time was to “call the reckoning” at each dinner and divide the cost between the members present. Even philosophers or pundits, however, could not fail in time to see that such a plan was not economically sound. The cost of providing a dinner would be pretty much the same to the caterer whether twelve or six persons were present, but when there were only six the charge to each one was comparatively heavy. The institution of the fine was the first rough-and-ready way in which this difficulty was met, and it was expected also to cover necessary expenses over and above the cost of the dinner. Like many social and political reforms, this one did not prove quite satisfactory, and demands for further contributions were made. The position taxed the abilities and the energies of the politicians, municipal and national, and of the scientific

experts, all of which classes were represented in the Club. It is not necessary to pursue in detail the struggles made and the various proposals put forward, during which, however, the peace of the Club was not seriously disturbed. The plan ultimately adopted was, as regards subscriptions, simple enough. There is a fixed charge of six shillings each for those present; but, as the cost of preparation has to be met, the full charge is made for absentees, reduced, however, to three shillings if a sufficient length of notice is given.

An annual subscription was subsequently fixed, as is hereinafter described. That appears satisfactory, but as the best laws when most wisely administered sometimes cause individual grievances, so here it has been found desirable to make exceptional arrangements. These are of two kinds, one the remission of fines in special cases, the other the creation of a class of Honorary members, on whom no fines are levied. That is the present condition, which appears to answer very well, but if in the unknown future other economical problems present themselves they will doubtless be met and solved by the wisdom and experience of the Club. But they will not, it is to be hoped, unnecessarily disturb the fiscal system now so happily established.

In the matter of place the Club has been somewhat migratory.

The earliest meetings were held at the Union Hotel, in Union Street, a fine old hostelry which is no longer in existence, but which was once one of the landmarks of old Birmingham, where the smoke room formed the Club of the period, and the sale room has witnessed the transfer of a great amount of real property in the town. Then for some time the Old Royal Hotel—since entirely altered in all ways—was the place of meeting.



Other places were tried, but from one cause or other—some of our philosophers were particular as to the quality of their dinners—no permanent settlement was made. At last, after wandering in the wilderness of change, the Club has reached the haven of rest at the Plough and Harrow Hotel.

The times of meeting were arranged by a resolution that they should be on the first Saturday in each month from November to April inclusive.

Birmingham, a town practically of modern growth, has not many local literary associations, but the Club has been desirous of preserving the memory of those that did exist. It was in pursuance of this wish that in 1865 a tablet was affixed to the house in the Old Square where Dr. Johnson visited Edmund Hector. The inscription, written by George Dawson, was as follows:—

“Here in this House Samuel Johnson was the guest, Edmund Hector was the Host. Of this Host this guest has written. Hector is likewise an Old Friend, the only Companion of my childhood that passed through the school with me. We have always loved one another.” This stone by leave of the owner of the House, William Scholefield, Esq., M.P., was put up by the Members of Our Shakespeare Club, Birmingham, A.D. 1865.

So rapid is the march of “Public Improvement” that this house has already been removed to make way for the construction of Corporation Street. The tablet has been placed in the “Doctor Samuel Johnson Room” at Aston Hall. At a later date a tablet was affixed to the house in Bennett’s Hill to commemorate the fact that it was the birth-place of the great artist Sir Edward Burne-Jones. The Club also took an early part in the movement to secure some permanent memorial of Dr. Priestley, the

Honorary Secretary being able at the meeting on the 4th of April, 1867, to report on the best means of providing such memorial, and, although not responsible for the actual course adopted, the members took an active part in its promotion.

About this time local public events attracted much attention. The Club has of course always taken a lively interest in Political and Social questions, especially those which affected the intellectual and moral progress of the people, such as the agitation in favour of the establishment of a National System of Education and the foundation of Free Libraries and Art Galleries. Beyond this there was always a desire, largely assisted by the teaching of George Dawson, for the promotion and encouragement of what has been properly called "a spirit of local patriotism." It was urged that the welfare of a great industrial community and the elevation of its inhabitants were objects worthy of the efforts of the ablest and most highly cultivated of its citizens. This was manifested in a marked degree when in the years from 1860 to 1870 efforts were made to improve the *personnel* of the Town Council and to elevate the general tone of its proceedings. Without assuming that any general influence could be exerted, or, indeed, should be attempted by the Club, it is certain that many of those who either in the Council or outside were working in this direction were encouraged and assisted by the sympathy and support which it offered. That the members of the Club have taken a fair share in the realisation of the principles which they advocated will be seen from the following statement :

Five of the members have had seats in Parliament, three having been in the Government; eleven have been in the Town Council, of whom five have been Mayor; and eight have held seats on those Committees which have had

charge of the Literary, Artistic, and Scientific Departments of the Council.\*

The formation of the Reference Library by the selection and purchase of its books was mainly carried out under the advice of Samuel Timmins, and the School of Art was practically reorganised by the efforts of John Henry Chamberlain and John Thackeray Bunce; no mention being made of the assistance rendered in these and other directions by those who fortunately still remain members of the Club.

It is not to be supposed that a Society like ours, so small in number and so peculiar in constitution, would furnish many events calling for special mention. At the ordinary meeting the serious and the trifling offered alternative attractions. There were standing subjects for comment, such as the contribution of portraits, and the designs for and provision of snuff-boxes and tobacco jars, and the regulation of the finances. As was only proper in a free community, there were agitations for a reform or at least for change in the laws. But there were few laws to alter, and nothing of consequence happened. At one meeting, however, something was accomplished, for a resolution was passed "That if a member be absent from the whole of the winter meetings"—in any one year it was understood—"the Secretary write him a letter directing his attention to the fact and requesting to be informed whether or not he wishes to continue a member of the Club." Exceptions have had to be made when absence has arisen from illness or from pressure by the performance of public duties, but the roll of membership is too small to contain the names of those who are not able to take their share in contributing to the general form of

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\*Matthew Davenport Hill, the first Recorder of the borough, was an Honorary Member.

enjoyment. In the comparatively uneventful years the Club never suffered from the want of topics of a graver character. There could, of course, be no record of such conversations, engrossing as they were at the time or vivid as their influence remained in the memory. One impression, indeed, their recollection cannot fail to produce, and it is this: that all subjects, however serious their nature, however deep and earnest the sentiment by which they were inspired—political, social, philosophical, ethical, or religious—may be treated without exciting animosity or disturbing the closest bonds of true friendship if the discussions are carried on with a due respect to the feelings of others, and with the one desire to arrive at the truth.

Among the incidents which did occur there were two somewhat prolonged absences of the President from the meetings. The first was in 1867, when a visit to Egypt was made, partly on considerations of health, and in 1874, when he undertook a lecturing tour in America. On both occasions special dinners were held to give him "god-speed" on his journeys and to celebrate his welcome return. It soon became evident, unfortunately, that his health was far from satisfactory. Ceaseless activity in travelling and lecturing told even on a naturally strong constitution, and no doubt the sword of an unusually active mind helped to wear out the scabbard of the body. On the last day of November, 1876, the blow of his death fell not only upon the Club, or even the town, but on a far wider circle of those who had admired his genius, valued his friendship, and benefited by his teaching. No words can express the sense of bereavement which was occasioned by his loss. It is not too much to say that to many of those who knew him most intimately, and therefore loved him best, life has never seemed the same since his death, and that they cherish his memory as a most precious treasure.

Here it may be enough to record the message which at the request of the Club was drawn up by John Henry Chamberlain and forwarded to Mrs. Dawson :

“That Our Shakespeare Club, with feelings of deep sorrow, places on record the irreparable loss it has sustained by the death of its Founder and President, George Dawson.

He was true in word and deed, great of heart, wide in spirit, wise in counsel, unchanging in friendship, loving, sympathetic, genial, and by his death the Club has lost one whose place can never be completely filled.

That Our Shakespeare Club desires to express its respectful sympathy with Mrs. Dawson and her son in their great trouble.”

No meeting was of course held in December, but on 13th January, 1877, it was resolved that Timmins should be President and John Henry Chamberlain Vice-President of the Club. The last-named office was now first created, but it has been found serviceable in the conduct of the business.

From 1877 to 1879 Timmins had not only occupied the position of President of the Club, but had continued to act as its Honorary Secretary. It was only reasonable that he should have required some relief from this double duty. Accordingly there is on the minutes under the date of 5th of April, 1879, a resolution “That T. Edgar Pemberton be Honorary Secretary for the Shakespeare Anniversary Dinner.” This relief was made more complete at the November meeting in 1882, when it was resolved “That T. Edgar Pemberton be elected Honorary Secretary of the Club,” and that “Thanks be given to Timmins for his services for many years.” Certainly no thanks were ever more thoroughly deserved.

On the 3rd March in that year the Club met for the first time at the Plough and Harrow, which has since been its regular place of meeting.

Again an uneventful period passed, but on the 22nd of October, 1883, another heavy loss was sustained by the Club by the terribly sudden death of its Vice-President.

John Henry Chamberlain was a man of very exceptional ability, who alike by originality of thought, fulness of information, charm of conversation, and geniality of manner had greatly endeared himself to his fellow-members. He was an effective and attractive public speaker, and a charming writer, qualifications which were of the greatest assistance to him in the prosecution of what he always regarded as his special function and duty; the promotion—it might almost be said the creation—in the town of a love of Art, and of an appreciation of its influence in the refinement, culture, and elevation of character, and thereby in the extension of the highest kind of enjoyment among all classes of the community. With what incessant zeal he prosecuted this purpose is a part of the history of the town, and its effect was enhanced by the practical illustrations furnished by those architectural achievements which remain, and form permanent memorials of his life and work.

His services to the Art Institutions of the Municipality have been before mentioned, but it was not to artistic movements alone that he applied his energies. It will be long remembered with what persistence and for how many years he served the Birmingham and Midland Institute as its Honorary Secretary, in which capacity it is universally acknowledged that he widely increased both its sphere of usefulness and the stability of its position. He died as he had lived, devoted to his noble work, for on the very evening of his death he had delivered at the

Midland Institute an address on "Exotic Art," which enforced much of his teaching. This address having been printed by order of the Club for distribution among the members and others of his numerous friends is given as an appendix. The feelings of the Club were expressed in the following resolution, which was forwarded to Mrs. Chamberlain:—

"Our Shakespeare Club desires to place on record the heartfelt sympathies of all its members with Mrs. Chamberlain and her family in the irreparable loss they have suffered from the sad and sudden removal of their beloved and honoured member, who was one of the Founders of the Club, and for nearly twenty-five years one of its most earnest and valued members, and whose brilliant intellectual and social gifts will ever be remembered with thankfulness and sorrow by his mournful friends."

At the February meeting in 1884 Bunce was elected Vice-President, and at the Shakespeare Anniversary Dinner in April he read "In Memoriam," an address on his predecessor. The even tenour of the period which now ensued may be gathered from minutes of the meeting on 6th of December in this same year, which read that "From the thirteen members present no fines were owing, and consequently no business was done." But business or no business, there happened to the little state what happens to greater ones. Financial difficulties arose and had to be met, the subscriptions not being adequate to cover expenses. The method—easy for a time if pregnant with future trouble—of placing existing burdens on the shoulders of future generations by raising loans was not

possible. So this position having to be faced, an expert adviser—a private member—was called in to assist the government, and on his recommendation it was, in November, 1888, resolved that a call of £1 each should be made on all members except two who had been recently elected—a generous consideration—that in future each member should pay an annual subscription of ten shillings, and that at the Anniversary Dinner wine should be paid for by those present. It would almost appear from the last clause that members or guests or both had been drinking at the cost of the public chest. The custom now is that a bowl of punch is brewed, which forms the contribution of the Club to the festivities of the members.

Anyway, the proposals were adopted, with the result that not only was the crisis averted, but that members can now enjoy the pleasures and advantages of the Club without any sense of unknown pecuniary responsibilities.

It was about this time that the Shakespeare Anniversary Dinners, of which mention has been made, began to lose their interest. In 1889 one was held at the Plough and Harrow, but only a few guests had been invited, and the attendance of members was meagre. This was the last occasion on which any invitations were sent out, although an unsuccessful attempt was afterwards made to renew the series.

From that time the special meetings, when called—which was not regularly done—were confined to members of the Club. It seemed a pity that a series of celebrations which had attracted so much interest and had given so much pleasure should thus be closed, but it is useless to attempt to preserve the form when the spirit has fled. The Anniversary does not want for celebrations in the City. Other organisations continue the work from which the Club has retired.



In 1888, at the January meeting, it was brought to the notice of the Club that those members who held seats in Parliament could not regularly attend the meetings, and it was magnanimously resolved "That in the case of members of the Club who are also members of Parliament, all fines are in future to be omitted." This ought surely to be an inducement to members, in addition to the ordinary influences of public spirit and patriotism to devote their abilities and their energies to the service of their country, so that its interests may be the better promoted and its policy the more wisely directed.

In 1890 an incident occurred which it is a pleasure to record. F. H. Henshaw, who was one of the original members, but who had been compelled by age and infirmity to retire from active membership, sent for distribution copies of his photograph taken on his 82nd birthday. It need not be said that they were received by the members with hearty thanks and best wishes to the donor, and they will serve as memorials of a very dear and highly valued friend, who unfortunately did not long survive this proof of his continued regard for them.

In 1891 the Chairman kindly undertook to prepare a chronicle of the Club from its commencement. This was a work occupying much time, involving as it did the examination of minutes of meetings held during thirty years. It was completed, printed, and presented to the Club at the meeting on the 21st April, 1894, and it was unanimously and heartily resolved "That the best thanks of the Club be given to the President, Mr. Sam Timmins, for his kindness in preparing the Annals of the Club, a work of great and permanent interest to his colleagues in the membership, for the labour he has bestowed upon the work, and for the admirable manner in which, by his thoughtful care, the volume has been printed." The

book upon which this well-deserved praise was bestowed will be valued by the members since it records events which, however apparently unimportant, will yet serve to revive in the minds of its readers memories of times and persons which will always be dear to them. The Chronicle, however, closed in 1893, and it has been thought that by continuing the narrative, and perhaps by the omission of some details, the history might be presented in a more complete form.

The execution of this work was almost the last of a long series of invaluable services which for nearly half a century the President had rendered to the Club. He had for some time suffered from failing health, and at the meeting on 5th October, 1895, a letter from him was read in which he tendered his resignation not only as President, but as a member of the Club. An effort was made to induce him to re-consider his decision, but it was useless, and the parting was final. No member can think without profound and painful emotion of the severance of a tie which connected him with a scholar so accomplished, a companion so charming, a friend so faithful. Unfortunately the closing days of his life were clouded by an affliction which cut him off from that active intellectual intercourse which had formed the greatest enjoyment of his life. He died on November 12th, 1902, leaving a name always to be held in honour and in reverence by the town whose highest and noblest interests he had so constantly and so earnestly striven to promote.

At the meeting in December the following resolution was passed:—"That the Club records with sincere regret the death of Mr. Samuel Timmins, F.S.A., one of the Founders of the Club, its Honorary Secretary for many years, and for some years its President.

However acute may be the sense of personal losses sustained, however melancholy the circumstances to be encountered, the vacant places have to be filled, the business of life has to be carried on and its duties performed. So at the meeting of the Club on the 20th November Bunce was elected President and Charles Edward Mathews Vice-President. The newly-appointed officers had soon to learn that logical expression or order does not always accompany literary or scientific acquirements.

The Club had created a class which it described as Honorary Members, but curiously enough some of them at least had been paying subscriptions. The members at last awoke to the consciousness that these conditions were contradictory, and at a meeting in 1896 it was solemnly resolved "That Honorary Members should in future be exempt from subscriptions." Whether it was that the Club desired to recoup itself for this act of generosity, or whether it was moved by ordinary considerations of economy, may be uncertain, but soon afterwards it was resolved that "To Honorary Members living outside Birmingham circulars for the ordinary meetings need not be sent." The result from a financial point of view was not considerable, for the Club lost the 10s. subscription and saved sixpence in the postage of letters.

At the meeting following that at which the first of these decisions was arrived at it was with great solemnity resolved that the April meeting should be held in May. Everyone knew that the meaning was that the meeting should be held in May instead of April, but even in little things it is quite as well to say exactly what is meant. This reference to an April meeting was a prelude to a last attempt to restore an old custom. In November, 1896, on the proposal of an unusually enterprising

member, the officers were asked to consider the question of a revived April 23rd Anniversary. It is to be supposed that they complied with this request, but nothing came of it, for three months later it was decided that only the ordinary meeting should be called in April. The past was dead and could not be revived.

For many years the President had been Editor of the *Birmingham Daily Post*, in which position he had not only conducted discussions on the very greatest subjects connected with national politics with great ability and admirable temper, but had rendered invaluable service in the promotion of the highest social, intellectual, and moral interests of the town. The Club shared the opinion that his retirement was a public loss, and at the January meeting in 1899 it passed with genuine enthusiasm the following resolution:—"That the members of the Club tender to their President, John Thackray Bunce, on his retirement from the Editorship of the *Birmingham Daily Post*, the assurance of their high appreciation of the great ability which he has displayed and of the eminent services which he has rendered to the best and highest interests of the City during his occupation of that important position, and they hope that he may have continued health and strength to enjoy the leisure which he has earned by such prolonged and honourable work."

Unhappily the hope expressed in this resolution was not realised. Before the end of the year our dear friend passed away. He died on the 28th June, 1899, and the colleagues who in January had anticipated so peaceful a retirement from professional work had in October to express the deep sorrow which his death had caused. They did so in the following resolution:—"That this Club desires to place on record its deep sense of the loss it has sustained by the death of John Thackray Bunce,

who was one of its original members, and who on the resignation of Samuel Timmins was unanimously elected its President. His high character and his public services have already been universally appreciated, but his name will always be held by the members of this Society, with which he was so closely identified, in grateful and affectionate remembrance."

There was no exaggeration in the description of the general recognition of the value of his public work. Services more multifarious or more important could never be rendered to any city than those which Bunce rendered to Birmingham. There was no department of the corporate life to which he did not give some assistance. And this not only in his editorial capacity, but also by his membership of institutions, societies, and committees. He was a man especially wise in counsel and prudent in judgment, and his advice was regularly sought by the active and responsible administrators of affairs when questions of importance arose and serious practical problems had to be solved. The clearness of his intellect was reflected in his literary style, which was manifested alike in his contributions to the Press by separate works such as the "History of the Corporation of Birmingham" and his article "Birmingham" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He had the special faculty of expressing strong opinions in the most moderate terms. The Council only embodied the feelings of the whole community when they conferred upon him the Freedom of the City, he being the fifth person on whom that honour had been bestowed.

At the meeting at which the above resolution was passed G. J. Johnson was invited to become President of the Club, an invitation which he accepted by letter dated October 11th, 1899. Under his Presidency affairs have

gone on in their usual placid manner. Members have met, they have conversed, and have discussed, and have at times agreed to differ, and they still retain their appreciation of the enjoyment which such unrestricted intercourse affords. Only one incident of a regrettable nature has occurred. The Honorary Secretary, T. Edgar Pemberton, had for some time been suffering in his health. It was indeed often evident that he performed his duties only by self-denying effort, exercised because of his devotion to the Club and his attachment to its members. The time came when he could no longer continue the exertion, and on the 3rd of October, 1901, a letter was read from him in which he said that he was compelled to relinquish the post that with infinite pleasure to himself he had held for nineteen years. Edgar Pemberton knows with what sorrow it was that his resignation was accepted, and how earnestly his colleagues hope for his restoration to health. As a token of the feelings of affection and gratitude with which he is regarded by the Club he was presented with a silver rose bowl, of which in his letter on receiving it he says, "I shall prize it as long as I live, and I know it will be cherished by those who come after me."

Whitworth Wallis has been appointed Honorary Secretary. May he long continue to exercise its pleasant duties.

Among the most enjoyable parts of the transactions of the Club has been the series of Summer Excursions to places selected either for their natural beauty or for the possession of archæological or historic interests. A complete list of the excursions is given in an appendix, but on some of these occasions the members have received such kind facilities or were accorded such graceful receptions and hospitality that an account of them cannot fail to be a permanent source of interest and pleasure.

The success of these Excursions, and consequently the enjoyment of the members, have been to a great extent due to the services rendered by the Vice-President, Charles Edward Mathews. His wide acquaintance, his tact and geniality, and his indefatigable energy have been displayed in all the necessary arrangements with the hosts, and in the settlement of the various programmes. He has invariably gone over the route in order to provide carriages, guides, hotel accommodation and the like. In these various undertakings he has of course been zealously assisted by the Honorary Secretary for the time being, who in every case has spared neither time nor labour in ensuring the success of the Excursions.

The first visit which calls for special notice is the one to Oxford on the 3rd June, 1882. On that occasion the Club received much courteous attention from various University officials. The Savilian Professor of Geometry, Mr. H. J. S. Smith, showed the members over the Museum, pointing out some of the special treasures which it contained. Much of the enjoyment of the day was due to the cordial and friendly solicitude manifested by that most genial and warm-hearted Oriental scholar Professor Max Müller. Besides accompanying the members to various places of general interest he entertained them at luncheon at All Souls' College, Sir William Anson, the Warden, presiding.

A one-day excursion on the 28th June, 1884, was to Broughton Castle and Compton Wynyates, special facilities being afforded for inspecting the first-named picturesque old mansion. At Broughton Castle the Club was received in a most hospitable and friendly manner by Lord and Lady Saye and Sele. His Lordship showed the party over the Castle himself, pointing out the most interesting features, among which the most notable one

was the secret room in which Pym and his associates met to arrange for the first stages of the struggle which they so long maintained on behalf of the liberties of their country. To stand in that little sanctum, thinking of what is and of what has been, was to receive an illustration of the continuity of English history of a very impressive character. Those who were present will long remember how, after entertaining the Club at luncheon, the kindly host and hostess stood on the beautiful lawn and waved a pleasant adieu to their departing guests.

The visit to Salisbury and Winchester which took place on the 26th and 27th of June, 1885, was marked by some most interesting incidents. At Salisbury the reception by Dean Boyle gave the members a very welcome opportunity of renewing the association with one who when holding the living of St. Michael's, Handsworth, had taken a most active part in all the movements which had for their object the social and intellectual progress of Birmingham. The Dean accompanied and guided the members over the Cathedral and entertained them at tea, leaving on their minds at parting the most pleasant recollections. At Winchester the proceedings though not less pleasant partook of a more formal character. The ex-Mayor, Mr. Frederick Morshead, one of the House Masters of the College, met the party at the station, and, accompanying them to the Town Hall, introduced them to the Mayor, by whom refreshments were offered. At the Cathedral Canon Butler acted as guide, so that the visit was made under the most favourable conditions. At the College the members after an inspection of the buildings were entertained at luncheon by Mr. Richardson, the second master, and Mrs. Richardson, bringing to a close the proceedings of a day which had been full of interest.



The scenes of the pilgrimage in 1887, which was made on the 24th and 25th of June, were Wells and Glastonbury. At Wells the Dean acted as guide over the Cathedral and its most interesting precincts, and the venerable Bishop, Lord Alfred Hervey, received the members at the Palace, over which he personally conducted them, pointing out its most salient features, and leaving in their minds the most pleasant recollections.

The excursion to Eton and Windsor on the 29th and 30th of June, 1888, was in some respects the most memorable one in the long and interesting series. At Eton the Rev. F. J. Tuck, one of the masters, accompanied the members over the College and the delightful grounds, and entertained them at tea. At Windsor the Queen, although in residence, allowed the Club to go through the Castle, and sent her pages to conduct them round. One pleasant incident seemed worthy of record. When examining one of the rooms to which much interest attaches the members were requested by the attendants to move quietly through it, as her Majesty was in the adjoining apartment, having left the one in question that the visitors might have opportunity for its inspection. A little matter, perhaps, but one which in its way illustrated the kindly and thoughtful spirit which endeared the venerable Sovereign to the affections of her people. The enjoyment of the visit to the Castle was rendered more complete by the attention of Mr. R. R. Holmes, the Queen's librarian, who pointed out the treasures of the collection and afterwards entertained the members at tea, and joined the party afterwards at dinner at their hotel.

At Cambridge and Ely, to which the members journeyed on the 27th and 28th of June, in 1890, they again received genial and hospitable attentions of the most charming kind.

At the University they were entertained at luncheon by the eminent Master of Trinity, Dr. H. M. Butler, and his accomplished lady. Mr. W. Aldis Wright, the distinguished Shakespearean scholar and critic, pointed out some of the literary treasures with which he was so well acquainted, and gave some information as to the revised edition of the works of the great Dramatist on which he was then engaged. At Ely, after a prolonged inspection of the great Cathedral and its precincts, the members were invited to luncheon at the Palace, where they were most cordially received by the Bishop, Lord Alwyne Compton, and Lady Compton. In well-deserved appreciation of the services rendered by the pioneers—C. E. Mathews and T. E. Pemberton—on the occasion of this and of previous excursions, the Club presented to each of them a copy of "Bacon's Essays," specially and artistically bound.

The places selected for the excursion in 1891 were Lincoln and Peterborough, and they were visited on the 26th and 27th of June. Dr. Butler, the Dean of Lincoln, showed the party over the Cathedral and precincts, and entertained them at tea. Here it may be said that in this case, as in those of the other Cathedrals which were visited, special opportunities were afforded through the kind attention of the guides for a fuller acquaintance than is generally made with the surrounding buildings, which are in many cases little less interesting than are the main structures themselves. Proceeding to Peterborough, the members were met and welcomed by the Bishop, Dr. Mandell Creighton, who himself led them over the Cathedral, and afterwards entertained them at luncheon at the Palace. It may be allowable to say that the conversation and the manners of their host, too short although the opportunities were, impressed his guests with a sense of the capacity and character of the prelate which caused

and justified his translation to the important see of London, and if he had lived might well have led to his call to a still more lofty place in the hierarchy of his Church.

The ride over the broad Yorkshire Moors to Bolton Abbey, which was made on the 29th June, 1894, was delightful and invigorating, and when the Club arrived at that central stage of its excursion it found in the Rev. A. P. Howes and Mrs. Howes a genial host and a charming hostess. Tea was served in the grounds of the Rectory, and the recollection of the scene when on a brilliant summer day, in a beautiful garden under the shadow of the grand old Abbey, a cheerful party sat scattered, enjoying at once the delight of idleness and the pleasure of cheerful conversation, will not easily be effaced from the memory of those who were fortunate enough to be present.

A visit to the Elan Valley and an inspection of the extensive works on the new Birmingham water supply undertaking formed the objects of the excursion on the 25th and 26th of June, 1897. This time the wonders of modern enterprise formed a subject of contemplation different from, but not less interesting than, the archaeological records of the past. The works were explained by Mr. Yourdi, the Assistant Engineer, and the members were entertained at tea at Rhyader by Mr. T. W. Williams, and to both those gentlemen the Club was indebted for their attention and kindness.

Similarly delightful was the visit to Savernoake and Marlborough, in May, 1899, on which occasion the Head Master of the College, the Rev. G. C. Bell, received the members, entertained them at tea, and acted as a most kindly guide to the interesting buildings which are under his charge.

On the way to Ross, from whence was commenced a trip down the Valley of the Wye on June the 26th, 1900, the Club stopped at Homme House to partake of the hospitality of William Kenrick, a member of the Club, and Mrs. Kenrick.

The excursion into Oxfordshire which was made on the 26th and 27th of June, 1903, was a very memorable one. At Kelmscott Manor House the party were received by Mrs. William Morris. To the minds of all who shared in the greetings of this gracious lady there must have been present the memory of the great man whose loss she has had to deplore. To some of the members of the Club William Morris had been personally known, and all of them have benefited alike by the record of a noble and strenuous life and by the glorious productions of his genius in Literature and in Art. Leaving, strongly impressed by these feelings, the party went on to Buscot Park, where they were entertained at luncheon by Sir Alexander Henderson, who had come from London for the purpose, and who welcomed them to an inspection of the art treasures of which he is the fortunate possessor, the most interesting feature of which is a room specially designed and decorated for the reception of the "Briar Rose" series of paintings by Burne-Jones.

Bowring taught no new lesson when he sang that

"Chance and change are busy ever,"

and Our Shakespeare Club has had its share of the vicissitudes of human life. Its ranks have from time to time been thinned by resignation or by death to such an extent that there remain upon the rolls now the names of only two of its original members.

Of those who have passed away special mention has been made of those only who held office in the Club. Of

the others much might be said, for there was not one of them who has not left behind affectionate remembrances which will remain a precious treasure to those who enjoyed the pleasure and the advantage of their friendly intercourse. The places thus left vacant have been filled by younger men who have yet some part to play in the active drama of life, in the performance of which they can find no better encouragement and receive no more useful preparation than in keeping alive the spirit which led to the formation and has been active through the whole existence of Our Shakespeare Club.

## APPENDIX.



# EXOTIC ART.

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A PAPER READ BY JOHN HENRY CHAMBERLAIN,  
IN THE BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND INSTITUTE,  
OCTOBER 22nd, 1883.

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During the past few days I have received many inquiries as to the meaning of the title of my lecture—indeed, the last one was put to me not half an hour ago—and these inquiries have been so often repeated that I was beginning to think that possibly no one, myself included, knew in the least what “Exotic Art” meant. Imagine, then, my relief on taking up the *Century Magazine* for the present month, to find an essayist who knew all about it.

Mr. W. J. Stillman, writing on the “Characteristics of London,” says, speaking of the English: “In taste they are barbarians.” That is his very emphatic verdict respecting us at the present time. He goes on to say:—“But, imperial as London is in all that pertains to industrial and commercial power, it is in the architectural manifestations of metropolitanism (except size) as provincial as New York or Boston. It is impossible to say that artistic feeling is exotic in England, not knowing with absolute certainty whether they were Englishmen who built the magnificent old cathedrals or not; but it does seem that, since the race was what it is, anything æsthetic is a chance flower, and of so rare occurrence that its exceptionality—its want of visible cause and effect in precedent or succession—proves the rule more clearly than though no example had ever been found. The cities of the civilized and half-civilized world will not furnish another such collection of hideous public edifices, with so little originality, so little sense of fitness or artistic insight, as the capital of England shows. A man who could develop artistic fire in such surroundings must be of a genius irrepressible by any compression of circumstance. St. Paul’s is a squat parody on St. Peter’s, with everything that is ugly of the original and no advantage of position like it—no approaches, no *ensemble*, a petrified infraction of common sense and æsthetic judgment. The British Museum is an ill-harmonized *pot pourri*



of Greek motives; Trafalgar Square, a curious antithesis to the Place de la Concorde, with the elaborate imitation of that freak of some barbarous Roman 'Pompey's Pillar,' instead of the obelisk, and that ludicrous combination of the shut-up and elongated, the National Gallery, crowning it. Even most of the later buildings, when there is a determined effort to be original, impress the stranger as ghastly evolutions of the stuff of which nightmares are made."

He is, therefore, of opinion that we are now barbarians in Art, and it would be his opinion also that we have always been barbarians in Art, and that our Art now is, and always has been, exotic, only he was not quite sure whether they were Englishmen or not who built the magnificent old cathedrals. If they were foreigners, then our Art has always been exotic; if not, once upon a time we had some living Art of our own.

Now, when it was settled some months ago that I should have the honour of speaking to you to-night, I did not imagine that, almost on the eve of my lecture, I should have accidentally furnished to me such convincing proof that there is at least one man who is positive, where I thought only of being suggestive, and who, when I thought only of inquiring how far the present Art of England is or is not exotic, writes boldly and says that it is exotic, and nothing more. It is really as if one meant to hint of some person that he had been a little careless in his accounts, and had not been quite as clear as is necessary with regard to what was his own property and what was that of other people, and while one was wondering in what kindly words his little peculiarities might be hinted at, another person should suddenly arise, and without any hesitation or ambiguity, should straightway denounce the offender as a practised thief and a life-long swindler. Now, I venture to think that if I had time and opportunity I could satisfy him on the one point in which he is in doubt. "The magnificent old cathedrals" are English work, and they were Englishmen who built them. I could show him, moreover, that these magnificent old cathedrals are not isolated monuments of Art, but are, instead, the surviving examples of an Art whose manifestations were not cathedrals only, but which showed itself quite as plainly in dealing with the commonest wants of that far-off time; an Art which ministered to the wants of all sorts and conditions of men, not only in its architecture, but in its sculpture and in its carving, in its painting, and throughout the whole of the decorative arts.

With one part, however, of this essayist's conclusions we may safely and altogether agree. Broadly speaking, there is a

wide and an essential difference between the Art of to-day and that of five hundred years ago; the difference being this—that the Art of England was at that date home-grown, native, and natural, and it is now largely exotic. Nor is there any difficulty in fixing with tolerable accuracy the exact date at which this great change took place. We may fix the birth of true English Art at the year 1050 or thereabouts, and give it five hundred years of uninterrupted, vigorous, and healthy life. We may fix the year 1550 as a central date, the date at which English Art had become, or was becoming, feeble—the date at which the presence of Exotic Art was beginning to show itself; and we may take the year 1850 as another date to be remembered, not because it marks the close of the era of Exotic Art, but because it is the date when the English were first made nationally conscious of the existence of many widely differing schools or phases of Art, which up to that date were practically unknown. These dates are not of course exactly accurate. The changes in question varied in various localities, but, broadly speaking, they are sufficiently correct, and they give us five hundred years of English Art, against three hundred years of Art which has been, and is, more or less exotic. The American essayist thinks that it is altogether exotic, but his statement is too sweeping and too general. We, at least, may content ourselves or discontent ourselves, which would be far more proper, by learning that it is at any rate partially if not largely exotic.

What, then, was the special nature of this change? What is Exotic Art? I need not tell anyone here the meaning of so common a word as “exotic.” But somewhat curiously, though it is a word of very general application, it has become connected in a very special manner with the art of gardening, and many of us when we hear of an exotic or exotics think instinctively of greenhouses and gardens. We have all seen over and over again that familiar paragraph of our newspapers, which appears from time to time when a platform or a building has been specially adorned with a few plants in pots, or evergreens in tubs, that “the platform was magnificently decorated with a collection of choice exotics from Mr. So-and-So’s nursery.”

Many years ago, Mr. Tennyson wrote a poem called “Amphion.” You all know how it begins:—

“My father left a park to me,  
But it is wild and barren,  
A garden too with scarce a tree,  
And waster than a warren:

Yet say the neighbours when they call,  
 It is not bad but good land,  
 And in it is the germ of all  
 That grows within the woodland"—

and so on. It contains some stanzas on exotic gardening, which are most apposite to our present subject. They are these:—

"But what is this I hear? A sound  
 Like sleepy counsel pleading;  
 O Lord! 'tis in my neighbour's ground,  
 The modern Muses reading.  
 They read Botanic Treatises,  
 And works on Gardening thro' there,  
 And Methods of transplanting trees  
 To look as if they grew there.  
 "The wither'd Misses! how they prose  
 O'er books of travell'd seamen,  
 And show you slips of all that grows  
 From England to Van Diemen.  
 They read in arbours clipt and cut,  
 And alleys, faded places,  
 By squares of tropic summer shut  
 And warm'd in crystal cases.  
 "But these, tho' fed with careful dirt,  
 Are neither green nor sappy;  
 Half-conscious of the garden squirt,  
 The spindlings look unhappy.  
 Better to me the meanest weed  
 That blows upon its mountain,  
 The vilest herb that runs to seed  
 Beside its native fountain."

Now Exotic Art is very much akin to Exotic Gardening in this particular—that the spindlings do often look most woefully unhappy. But the parallel is still more complete. Exotic Gardening and Exotic Art are both alike in this particular—that in each an endeavour is made to reproduce, under new conditions, the particular products of other and different conditions; and whether it is a plant that is imported by an enthusiastic gardener, or a style of Art that is imported by an artist, one of two things must happen—the plant or the style must acclimatize itself or adapt itself to the new conditions; or artificial conditions, resembling the natural ones as nearly as possible, must be created for both plant and style.

This is a truth that is quite obvious to all gardeners, but up to this present date is quite the reverse of obvious to the majority of those who have to deal with Art. If you bring a palm from the Tropics and plant it in good, cold, solid English clay in your own garden, it hardly takes a gardener to say what fate will befall it. Everyone knows what will happen. But import into England a style or a part of a style, which has been originated by a race of men differing from ourselves quite as widely as the temperate zone differs from the tropical, and most people would fail to see any reason why it should not live an entirely healthy life under its new conditions. The fact is, we know—at least most of us know—when a plant is dead or alive. We can see for ourselves what sort of measure our climate can deal out to these tender foreigners, and when we see the bright leaves shrivelled by frost, or the whole plant cut down in a night by a temperature which has only left a charmed whiteness on our English fields, we know what has happened. But when we walk through our cities and our towns and look at the dead and dying fragments of all kinds of Art that surround us, we most likely fail to recognise the true state of the case, and take Death for Life. Remember, as a nation, our experience of Living Art is small, and therefore our mistakes are not greatly to be wondered at; yet between Living Art and Dead Art there is a difference most perceptible to all who can see it. Our American essayist sees it. He, at least, knows that our Art of five hundred years ago differs in kind from that of to-day. It is the difference between the living and the dead—the difference between National Art and Exotic.

At present I have but very indirectly answered the question that I proposed—What is Exotic Art? We may define it, affirmatively as "Foreign Art out of place," or as "Foreign Art under false conditions;" yet I think it may best be defined negatively as "Art that could not possibly have been evolved from the natural conditions of the country using it." Thus, for instance, the English race on English soil, had it existed for tens of thousands of years, and had it been throughout all time gifted with as thorough a passion for Art as it is now with that of making tunnels and embankments, it would certainly never have built a Pyramid or reared an Obelisk; and it is quite possible that it would never have had an architect, however gifted, who would have designed such a building as the British Museum, or such a Cathedral as that of St. Paul's, or such a Church as that which has taken the name of St. Peter in our own Dale End.

Now, we know perfectly well that however much we may cultivate our English soil certain kinds of growth are always impossible to us, and will always continue to be impossible; but we do not know that in Art there are also very stern and strict limits to possibility. We fancy, on the contrary, that we can transplant any foreign growth of Art that we may happen to admire, and that it will flourish here as bravely as though it were still rooted in its native soil; and owing to the influence of this belief, the Art of England, with one or two very important exceptions, has been more or less exotic for the last three hundred years. And it is exotic now to a degree far greater, I think, than we generally suspect. I venture to think that it is worth our while to try and find out what are the real facts of the case—not out of idle curiosity, but because it has a direct bearing upon one or two questions much talked of and much discussed in the present day. Some of us at least can remember the time when Art certainly formed no topic for general conversation. It is not very long ago, but in comparatively few years there has come about a great and surprising change. No greater period than some twenty-five years has elapsed since that time, and now Art is a matter of very general interest. At that date it was of but little use putting a lecture or lectures upon Art into a general programme, for but few would come to listen to lectures upon a subject which possessed no general interest. Since that date all is changed, and we think and talk and write about Art perpetually. Every year a greater number of our people busy themselves with respect to this matter, and every year an increasing number of persons of both sexes enter into studios and schools with the intention of devoting their lives to the pursuit of Art. It has become more than a matter of conversation; it is influencing character and life, and will mould and change in some important respects the future of the nation; so that the subject is one worth inquiring into, that we may see, if we can, not only where we really now stand, but what prospect lies before us in the future. In making this inquiry we shall find difficulties more than enough, owing to the largeness of the subject. Art is but a word of three letters, but short as it is, it includes whole kingdoms. It contains at least these chief and most important divisions: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, and the whole of the Decorative Arts. It would be a long labour merely to catalogue the subdivisions which might be grouped under these different headings; yet we cannot treat the subject generally or as a whole, because we are in an altogether different position with regard to the most important of these main divisions. For instance, we

cannot say that our Art is generally exotic, because we must certainly exclude Painting, or at the least the most popular of its schools—viz., that of Landscape Art. In that great and glorious and always delightful branch of Art we have borrowed from none, nor imported from any. It is English throughout—in idea, in manner, in motive, in thought, and in conception. It is a real Living Art, full of health and vitality, and with the promise before it of endless successes and countless triumphs. It is not enjoyed out of affectation, or at the dictate of authority. It is not bound and fettered by old practice, or the custom of nations that have perished. We do not look at our own fields and trees and rivers and clouds through Greek or Roman or Italian spectacles. We see our own land with the unclouded vision of our own eyesight, and deal with what we see with minds uninfluenced by the opinions of other races or nations. We should have been in an altogether different position had the Greeks or Romans painted landscape, and had their work remained until the present day. In that case our artists would have been bound as our architects and sculptors have been bound, and ancient and foreign tradition would have been used to crush all native thought and freedom; or if it proved too strong to be destroyed altogether, would have compelled it to conform to foreign manners, and appear only in a foreign disguise.

From the thralldom of Exotic Art the men of the Brush and Palette are nearly free, and in some schools free altogether. Not that in the history of painting, were it fully written, the presence of the exotic influence would not have to be shown as marring and spoiling and hindering from time to time, but there has never been any complete slavery, and some branches of this great Art have not at any time felt the weight of even a single link of the chain.

With regard to Sculpture there is not much to be said. Except in the minor art of Carving it is practically non-existent. It is used, as we know, mainly for monumental purposes; but it does not enter into ordinary life. It has no reason for existence, no subject with which to busy itself. It is alike impotent for good or for evil. We have sculptors, no doubt—men of ability, of skill, and of artistic power—but there is nothing for them to do that comes within the range of everyday life. If the race of painters were to cease we should miss them greatly, and deplore the loss bitterly; but if the sculptors were to cease the nation as a nation would hardly know that they were gone. The reasons cannot justly be given in a few brief sentences, but perhaps the main cause is that these artists of the Chisel will have nothing to do with ordinary and common life. We are not fit subjects,

they say, for the Art of the Sculptor. Modern costume does not "lend itself" to sculptural treatment. You do not wear togas, and you do wear—or the most misguided of you do wear—"top" hats; your noses are not in a straight line with your foreheads; and, in fact, there are countless difficulties in the modern sculptor's path.

It cannot treat either you or your doings or your belongings in a Classic manner; or if it does, you express and you rightly feel no pleasure in the work when done; and as on the one hand the sculptor cares nothing for us as we are, and on the other hand we care but little for his work when he has transformed us into the fashion that he thinks we ought to hold, there is no agreement between us, and no possible profit or pleasure to be obtained the one from the other.

We should, perhaps, not be far wrong if we ventured to hold that the very possibility of a large and national school of Sculpture has been killed by the influence of Exotic Art. The marbles of ancient Greece and Rome have destroyed the Art that they were meant to revivify. They were and are exalted into the position of unsurpassable models. It was held, and is held, that the topmost reach of the Art of Sculpture was attained two thousand years ago, and that the only hope of any present success lies in the study of those great examples. It is an utterly hopeless task to expect success in anything, if we hold with regard to it that in that particular path or calling the best and highest possible has been done already, and that there are no sideways or openings for new efforts and new successes. It does not matter what work man is called upon to do; whatever it is, if in that particular work the best and highest have been already achieved, it is time to take a fresh departure. It is not to be wondered at that sculptors despair if the world holds that the Greek manner is the only possible manner, and that the highest possible pitch of excellence has in it already been attained. But the error—for it is an error, and a great and grievous one—is in thinking that even in Sculpture the Greeks exhausted the possibilities of Art. Let us accord them all the tribute we can devise for their marvellous skill and artistic power, but do not let us imagine even in Art that the Greek kingdom included the whole world. Let our sculptors but endeavour to deal with us as the sculptors of old dealt with their own people, with their legends, their histories, their laws, and their whole being, and something at least would come of the effort; for whether the endeavour succeeded or failed it would create some interest, and with that interest life of some kind would

revive. But at the present hour Sculpture is practically so near death that even death might be welcomed in hope of a resurrection.

I come, then, to Architecture and the Decorative Arts, to see, if we can, how far these are at the present hour exotic or otherwise, and what their history has been for the past three hundred years.

Let me recall to your remembrance that central date—1550. We are apt to say of it that it was not only the date of a great and thorough change in the Art of the nation, but that the change was brought about from two different reasons; the first being that the Art of our own country had spent its force—had sunk into decay—and was fast dying a perfectly natural death; and the second, that the new style—the style that endeavoured to take its place throughout the length and breadth of England—was adopted on account of the growing admiration of the Italian Renaissance. Men speak and authors write upon this subject as if it were the most natural thing in the whole world to change the style of Art of a nation at pleasure. But it is not so. It is perhaps not difficult to corrupt a style of Art—English taste has not on the whole worked good for India—but it is no easy task to change a national style completely—perhaps it is even an impossible one.

Now, from the year 1050 to the year 1550 the history of English Art had been the history of continuous development. Whatever men had found need for they had managed to supply, and in satisfying their physical wants they had satisfied also, and at the same time, their love of beauty. They had to begin with covering the island with buildings fitted to carry on their two great ideals—religion and war; but they had erected also countless other buildings for all classes of men. They had raised cities and towns and villages, and of all these it might be truly said that in the first place they thoroughly satisfied their everyday wants—that, in fact, they built what they wanted in the way they wanted, and with the materials they wanted to use; and, in the next place, nothing that they built was devoid of beauty; and the whole series of groups made up a magnificent School of Art, which embodied all that the people of those centuries knew or felt to desire with respect to grace and beauty and glory. The furnishing of all these buildings, from the jewelled work on the cathedrals to the common vessel carried by the peasant to the spring, was equally adapted to perfect use, and equally joined to some class of beauty. The dress of the people was useful and convenient and beautiful, and the whole of the arts, from the greatest to the most humble, were in one accord. Each, according



to its capabilities and in its degree, was animated by the same feeling and manifested the same love for all that is beautiful and delightful. Now, at that time there were no Schools of Art, no Lectures on Art, no Galleries of Art, no Museums of Art; but there was Living Art, and that made a sufficiently good substitute. For five hundred years at least this Art had grown as a tree grows under favourable conditions—without apparent effort, but living and growing, increasing and multiplying, putting forth branches wherever there was room for branches to grow, having leaves and buds and blossoms, and bearing fruit. Let us also remember that this Art was all wrought out by our own ancestors, living for the most part very ordinary commonplace English lives—men and women who in no very essential particular differed from ourselves; who busied themselves much in the same spirit and much in the same manner as we do to this hour; who worked at the same occupations and played much at the same games; who thought and felt, and did good and evil, much in our own nineteenth-century manner, always allowing for the difference of the means of life ready to their hands and to ours. They were as fond of shooting as we are, but their weapon or their instrument was of necessity the long-bow, whilst ours is the rifle. They had a little Wimbledon of their own in every parish, and, allowing for the change in language talked at those meetings, I have no doubt, just the kind of talk that is used at a rifle meeting at the present day. We are slow to change, and there is not an old building of any magnitude now existing which does not show us that the Englishman of old time was, to all intents and purposes, in his inmost nature, and in many of his outward characteristics, the true fellow of the Englishman of to-day. If we are not ashamed of ourselves we have no reason to be ashamed of our ancestors, for down to his very latest development in wisdom or in folly, in strength or in weakness, in blindness and in insight, in courage, in daring, and in all other qualities, the Englishman of to-day may find his counterpart in the Englishman of five hundred years ago if he will take the trouble. It is not our business to-night to prove the truth of these words, but if it were it could be done.

Yet being the same people, we are met in this kingdom of Art with this strange fact, that we seem to have in great measure lost one of the widest and best of our national faculties, and are only just waking to the true nature and extent of our loss. In fact, the loss has been so complete and thorough, that we talk about ourselves, and we are talked about, as if there was some inherent defect in our race, which makes it impossible that we can or could at any time be artistic. Some folks say that we

are like the Romans, great in the art of road-making and engineering, and other kindred arts, but as to Fine Art, without any original power, and with but very little perception of the existence of that power in other people. To all which reproaches, to all the adverse comment that we make upon ourselves, or that others make upon us, we have this answer—an answer that is true and sufficient. For five hundred years, at least, we had Art, wide and all-pervading Art of our own, differing in kind and in quality from that of any other nation under the sun: an Art that was knit in the bonds of closest sympathy to the Art of Northern Europe during the same period, but an Art that was no servile copyist or imitator of the Art of other nations, but an Art that was moulded by our English nature, and was penetrated throughout by English feeling and sympathy. We might, in fact, as justly say that we have had no National Schools of Poetry or of Literature, as that we have had none of Art. But whereas we need not go back to Chaucer if we want to show that we have poets, or to his fellows, or his immediate successors, to show that we have a National School of Poetry, we must go back to the centuries between 1050 and 1550 to show that we have had a National School of Art. Artists of all kinds we can show in plenty since that date, and many works of art which they have built or made, but no general realm or kingdom, embracing the highest and the lowest also. No symptom of a really national style, no evidences of collective effort, no brotherhood in Art, no common or general feeling concerning it, no real advance, no gain that may be counted; but, instead, individualism only, ceaseless experiment, constant use of new models, no unity of purpose, no concentration of skill or of effort or of purpose; but, instead, wasted lives, and wasted time, and wasted expenditure, until we woke up nationally somewhere about the year 1851, to find that we were artistically well-nigh destitute.

I venture to argue that the fault is not inherent in our race. Our living painters are sufficient in themselves to disprove any such assertion; but with regard to Art as a whole we have been misled, and have gone astray, and have left the only right and possible path leading to success, for others that can only lead to destruction.

The secret of the great error has been, that we have been misled by admiration for Exotic Art into thinking, that because it was worthy of admiration, it was possible for us to make it our own. We thought that all we had to do was to import it, as we import other merchandise. We thought that we could enjoy the inheritance of other men, and reap a harvest, for which we had

neither prepared the ground nor sown the seed. It was done in ignorance or in forgetfulness, and the result is that which we have seen.

Now, in the matter of Architecture alone, what has this false admiration done for us in three hundred years. The history, or at least the main outlines of it, may be quickly told. We have imported (duty free) large consignments of the Italian Renaissance. The trade began at first in a timid way, just as our merchants used, and perhaps still use, to bring over samples of merchandise to tempt the buyer and feel the market. But the first imports were strongly recommended. The change was coincident with the revival of letters, with the death of the whole Mediæval system, and the first great outburst of modernism. It was the first and greatest revival, one that has had countless historians, and yet whose full and complete history has never been written, and perhaps never can be written. It was no doubt a great development, an irresistible impulse on the part of the human race, a change as necessary, and on the whole as good, as it was beyond the power of prince or potentate to stay it. But it was in many respects anomalous, and nothing about it perhaps more strange than that the whole end and aim of the revolution being progress, the mode adopted was, in Literature and Art, to go back. To go back to antiquity, to sit at the feet of the ancients, to study their literature, their customs, and their art; these were the methods adopted by the men whose one aim was to escape from a thralldom which they felt held them in captivity, and which prevented them from progress. In their detestation of the chains of the present they looked for help to the past, and by way of going forward deliberately went back.

In the new schools, fast becoming almost the only schools, the praise of the ancients was on everybody's lips. Literature and Art were alike imbued and penetrated by this new worship. All that we had done for ourselves was forgotten or despised, and in Literature, and in Art also, no way was the right way, no custom was the right custom, but that which was at least supposed to be sanctioned by ancient example; so that in Art the "properties"—for, at least, at first they were nothing more—the "properties" of Pagan Rome and re-born Italy were imported to this country, and he was a barbarian indeed, who, having to build, refused to use them. No inquiry was made as to their suitability, their fitness, their need—they were received with transports of admiration, and used, at least for a time, without intelligence or perception. Thus for the first time since the departure of the Romans, the English race was made acquainted with the five

orders, and was introduced to colonnades and pediments, to balustrades and urns, in short, to all the worn-out stock of properties belonging to the Classic or Pagan dressing room.

The real Native Art of England retreated to country places, to villages, to quiet corners and pleasant nooks, and waited, not quite in vain, for better times. The work of the Classic Revival meantime went on; it became learned, and refined, dignified, and dull. It became the one and only style for all public buildings, and for all other buildings belonging to the truly great. It extended its sphere until the very stables were built in a classic manner, and no English citizen could live comfortably unless his door was in the middle of the front of his house. It deprived Architecture of all power of originality, all thought of development, and left it more and more bald and unsatisfactory each year that passed by. But as it always happens, and as our merchants know well, the success of one importer leads to emulation on the part of other importers. It was found in course of time that there were other styles in the universe besides that or those of Pagan Rome. It was found that Roman Art was not original—was in fact but a travesty or a caricature of an Art better and higher, at once more beautiful and more noble. It was seen that the Art of Greece really stood in the same relation to the Art of Rome, as that of Rome herself to the Italian Renaissance. Grecian Art was therefore imported and imitated, and for a time the nation, or those few in the nation who still cared about Art, were as earnest in its favour as their ancestors had been with respect to the Art of Rome; so that the forms invented to adorn the greatest and grandest buildings of the most intellectual artists that the world has known, might be seen by wholesale in England, and made not in marble, but on painted deal or cheap stucco on shop fronts, and suburban villas, and suburban terraces, while the backs of these imposing edifices were of native brick only, with windows whose Classic simplicity of outline once nearly gave rise to a distinctive style—that known by the name of the “hole-in-the-wall.”

Without going into minutiae, we have imported the following exotic styles during the past three hundred years, viz. :—

- Italian Renaissance.
- Roman.
- Greek.
- Egyptian (in small quantity only).
- Byzantine.
- Moorish.
- Chinese.

And during the last five-and-twenty years scraps and specimens, bits and pieces of every style or stylet that man has invented from the North Pole well-nigh to the South.

Though I am speaking of Architecture principally, we must not think that it alone was affected by this fashion for bygone Art or foreign Art. The whole of the Decorative Arts which are concerned in dealing with furniture, or utensils, or any of the needs of everyday life, were influenced in a similar manner and degree—and as the taste or the whim or fashion of the year or the hour varied, so our chairs and tables; in short, the work of the cabinet maker, the silversmith, the potter, the weaver, and a hundred others was Grecian, or Roman, or French, or Italian, or something made up of a mixture of each. A very good example of this wholesale importation of the Art of some other nation, and the application of it to objects of domestic use, is to be found in a book published by a Birmingham man some forty years ago. He was a well-known silversmith, and his memoirs, which contain a detailed description of all his inventions and chief works of Art, with illustrations, are very amusing. We may take one example only. He conceived the idea of a service of plate which should be purely classical. This is what he says:—

“I was convinced that in no one instance was there to be found a complete service of plate that could be styled, on the whole, *classical*. . . . I was desirous that my native town should have the opportunity and honour of making a truly classical service; and for the embodying of the designs I did not see that I could take my stand with so much success as at the Acropolis, at Athens. . . . I was of opinion that the Temple of the Parthenon would of itself furnish the whole, or nearly so; and when I speak of a service of plate, I mean from the massive long plateau down to the salt-cellars; and I felt convinced that the whole of the pieces might be embodied out of the Eastern or front tympan, which is the birth of Minerva, etc.”

Thereupon he addressed the King in the following manner:—

“To His Most Excellent Majesty King George the Fourth.

“May it please your Majesty.

“As heaven has inspired your Majesty with such great taste for the Fine Arts, that your Majesty not only studies their theory, but often is graciously pleased to condescend to honour the inventor of any work of Art with the inspection of it, I am encouraged to hope that your Majesty may deign to look over the accompanying drawings which I have projected, with the intention of their being applicable for a classical service of plate.”

He then goes on to give the details of each separate piece, from which we will select only two:—

IV.—THE SOUP AND SAUCE TUREENS.

“The representation of the battles between the Lapithæ and the Centaurs, so popular among the Athenians, and with which Phidias and Ictinus, the architects of the Parthenon, embellished the numerous metopes of that magnificent temple, I propose to be the ornamental subject for the body of the Soup and Sauce Tureens.”

V.—THE CURRY DISHES AND WARMERS.

“The dispute between *Neptune and Minerva* for the possession of Attica, and the triumph of the goddess, as represented in the western tympan of the Parthenon, may be aptly applied, in complete and perfect figures, to decorate the curry dishes and warmers;” and so on.

Such Art was indeed most truly Exotic!

Now, what was the result of this importation? The result was probably unintentional, but it was this in absolute fact; that the English nation once artistic, lost any love or care for Art, and had an era of its own, during which it was quite happy and contented, when with but rare exceptions, no person thought about Art, or cared for it, or lived for it, or understood it.

Since that day there has been a revival of Art, and it is not to be denied that once more it occupies a fair share of public attention, and that from one cause or another that attention is on the increase. Dates will not always arrange themselves with that symmetry that one desires, so that in trying to fix the date of any very noticeable change, one is in a difficulty; for it always happens that the change itself had its beginning in one or more places long before it so affected the nation as a whole as to be seen by ordinary observers. Thus, if we fix upon the middle of this century, and take the year 1851 as the first year of the great national change in temper and feeling with regard to Art, we must not lose sight of the truth that one of the most important factors in the change had had its beginning at least one hundred years previously. In the very midst of the deepest degradation that English Art has known, when the dulness of Queen Anne—I mean the real Queen Anne, not the modern fiction called by her name—when that dulness had given place to the actual death of the middle part of the Georgian era, a set of men—scholars for the most part—had begun to inquire about that old architecture of our own which, as we have seen, was blotted out in favour of Exotic Art, in the middle of the sixteenth century. At first these inquiries were few and far between, but their numbers

increased, and inquiry led to admiration, and admiration led to imitation, as it always does. So began the great Gothic revival, and this revival up to the year 1851 had been steadily proceeding for about one hundred years, gathering strength and acquiring knowledge in its progress. Of that revival but little must be said to-night. It forms the subject of the lectures Mr. Morris is to give here, in the beginning of next year, and I cannot do better than leave it in his able hands. Yet this lecture would be altogether incomplete if I made no reference to it, but I will refer to it most briefly. This revival of Art was so far like the Italian Renaissance that those who advocated and practised it went back to past times. They did not try without reference to the past, to work out Art from their own wants, but they endeavoured to use the art of a past age for those wants. The endeavour had a two-fold advantage over the somewhat similar endeavour on the part of the Englishmen of the sixteenth century. For, to begin with, although in a modified degree, the Art known as Gothic had never ceased to be practised in England. They had not to go back for many hundreds of years, but for two hundreds of years only, and indeed not fully to go back at all, for in many parts of England the traditions remained unbroken, and in many places the very practice was still substantially unchanged. In quiet villages and country places, whatever building was done, whatever architecture was used, was Gothic in its spirit, and in a modified and subordinate manner unchanged in detail also. It was not the Gothic of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It had no particularly lovely details, it had no decided architectural features, but it was humble, lowly, and unpretending, and yet accorded well with the beauty of our English landscape, and perfectly with the tone of thought and feeling of those who used it. It was Gothic shorn of its outward glory, Gothic fallen upon a day so far evil that men did not recognise or care for ornament, and only for beauty in a quiet and unobtrusive way. But it was true Art notwithstanding, for it ministered to common want, and touched with some measure of beauty everything that came from its hands; so that the Gothic revival had not to make any great change, but rather to add fresh fuel and revive the embers of a smouldering fire.

Then, again, this revival did not concern itself with Exotic Art at all; for this Gothic Art was the style most natural to the country, and the peculiar forms that it took, those which were most akin to English thought and feeling. If, as I hope we have agreed, Exotic Art is that which could naturally have never

developed itself in the country to which it had been brought, this was surely not Exotic Art, for in this very country, in these fields, and amongst these trees, and by this *unchanged* people, this very Art had had its development. Yet a revival is an essentially different matter from a true development. No mere revival is lasting. Of whatever kind they are, they have their day, they make their little noise, blow their fifes and beat their drums, and march in the streets in triumph, and then they are forgotten, and some other revival takes their place.

The Gothic revival erred in its degree in the same way that all Art revivals have erred. It imitated and copied results without caring to find out how those results had been brought to pass. It copied ornaments and imitated prettinesses without inquiring whether the life still remained in them, or if, on the contrary, it had perished. It did not take sufficiently into account, that change as little as we may, and that although we may be in all essentials as our ancestors were some hundreds of years ago, yet that there must needs be change, and that although it may be slight, it must be taken into account. It was also not understood that the mass of monuments then standing, the work of the Middle Ages, was mostly of one particular type, and that the ecclesiastical one. The churches had remained, whereas a thousand causes had acted together to banish from the land the secular buildings and the secular arts. Castles and fortified houses had mostly perished. The growth of the towns had swept away, with here and there but a few exceptions, the quaint and charming houses in which citizen and townsman had lived, and with them had perished also the furniture of which they were proud, and the common household goods which had served their needs and given them pleasure. But in every parish stood at least one building fashioned in the type of Ecclesiastical Gothic, and these buildings naturally became the pattern and exemplars of the revivers.

But the ordinary want of that date, as of this, was for secular work, and not for ecclesiastical work. The common needs were for houses to live in, and shops to sell in, for markets and exchanges; and for home use, chairs and tables, and cupboards, vessels to eat from, and cups to drink with. All these wants the revivers tried, at least for many long years, to supply from their ecclesiastical pattern-book, and so far as this practice prevailed, the error was similar in spirit, if not in degree, with that of the importers of Exotic Art. But this mistake became obvious by degrees, and was in great measure rectified, and after a hundred



years of preliminary work the Gothic revival was in a position to take, and did take, a very active part, in fact the most active part, that was taken in the general change of English feeling with regard to Art.

But while it was endeavouring to solve its very difficult problem, and slowly finding out that it had begun much at the wrong end, a combination of causes set going that remarkable revolution of which we have spoken. The great International Exhibition was held, as we all know, in the year 1851, and it brought home to the English, as the truth had never been brought to them before, that great as they might be in many respects, there was at least one subject in which they were worse than weak. The great show in Kensington Gardens taught the nation generally two very important truths—the first being that there was such a thing as Art, and the second that the nation knew but little about it. Almost at the same date, as we all know also, the power and the enterprise of England asserted itself on a greatly increased scale. We must go to statisticians if we want to get at the full truth of this part of the subject; but we have only to look at any of our great towns of to-day, and remember what they were thirty years ago to see how great the difference is. Our own grandfathers would stand aghast—if they had strength to stand—to see what we have done, and would prophesy that such reckless extravagance must lead to speedy ruin. Many an old barrier has been broken down since that well-remembered year. From our own point of view the change may be summed up in one sentence—then no one wanted Art, now we want Art for all. In the Art world, also, other barriers were broken through. It was thought then that there had been no Art worthy the name, but that of Greece, of Rome, of the Renaissance, and of the Mediævalists. Not that there was perfect accord even as to these, but these, if granted, left nothing outside. Since that date enterprise of one kind or another has brought to our knowledge many another style, and kind, and manner of Art than these four; and while science in the form of photography has given us the means of seeing them to some extent for ourselves, we have learned to judge of Art that is new to us, and that does not follow our own laws and ordinances, with more fairness and more justice than in time past. The barrier that was set up against everything heterodox has been broken through, and we have learned that to different and differing men different Arts belong. We have still to learn the great lesson, that races that differ in idea cannot have the same Art, and cannot make practical use of the Art of one another.

Such, however, most briefly and imperfectly related, being the history of the past thirty years as regards Art, what practical effect has it had upon us? We have seen already that we must not take Painting or Sculpture into our account, for Painting holds its own and Sculpture is not. We must restrict ourselves to Architecture and the Decorative Arts. Yet the restriction is one that exists mainly in name; for Architecture and the minor Arts that follow, and always have followed its footsteps, take a far more important part in ordinary and common life than the art of Painting. As far as that Art goes, a vast number of persons think they have done their duty when they have been once a year for a short time to an exhibition of pictures. Comparatively few even do as much as this, and many thousands upon thousands pass through their lives and never see a picture at all. But every householder under the sun—at least where any kind of decent or respectable life is led, however poor or however humble—contains some one or more articles which Decorative Art has modified or influenced, or perhaps adorned. The mass of mankind is so habituated to its presence that its presence is unseen, but is never unfelt. If you like to try the experiment, turn outside of your house all those articles you have in it which have some shape or form or pattern or device that is not absolutely essential to bare use, and you will find that your walls and floors and cupboards and closets are left bare. You will not have even so much left to you as a plate, or a cup and saucer; so that, restricted though it may be, our subject is still far too wide to permit us to see more than a very small part of it.

With regard, then, to Architecture and the Decorative Arts, the effect of the great series of changes since 1851 has been to make them from one point of view more exotic than ever. Our buildings, our streets, our houses, and our rooms are covered with forms and ornaments that we should never have invented had we been left to ourselves, nor even imagined. Every past style of the earth, as far as styles are known, has been laid under contribution by the architect, the decorator, or the upholsterer. As we go through our streets, if we choose to name or try to name the features that challenge attention, we shall have to use the name of almost every nation, every community, every great city, and almost every collection of wigwams and igloos that the world has known. And if out of doors we only see the influence of our newly-acquired knowledge, indoors we are brought into contact with many of the actual objects themselves, and Exotic Art blocks up our drawing rooms, and, stuck upon our walls, makes the narrow passages of our narrow houses needlessly narrower.

But like Ophelia, we wear our rue with a difference. We are at least not bound by similar fetters to those worn by our ancestors. We deal with these imports of ours with surprising freedom. Their true authors would be a little surprised if they saw to what strange translations they have been subjected. It is ever and ever again the tale of "Imperial Cæsar, dead, and turned to clay." "To what base uses may we return," says Hamlet. If he had only seen our modern Art!

The fact is that even in such matters as imitation and copyism there are certain natural laws which seem to be fixed, and from which there is no escape. When any foreign or exotic style or part of a style is imported it is at first treated with absolute license, arising no doubt in the majority of cases from pure ignorance. This early stage is often the only stage, and is always so when the basis of admiration is narrow. In that case the new fashion that, mushroom-like, had sprung into existence, fades as rapidly as it rose. It is seen and admired, smiled at, laughed at, ridiculed, disused, and forgotten; but when it has something wider to rest on than individual caprice, when the admiration of it is widespread, and the belief in it is deep, the stage of license is succeeded by one of law.

Thus in our own island the Italian Renaissance, imperfectly understood and ignorantly used, gave rise to one of those styles always regarded as debased—viz., the Elizabethan. In this style, for it was a style, the architects or artists (they are not always one and the same) used such details of the Renaissance as they had acquaintance with with absolute license. They used them as the barbarians who conquered Italy used the fragments of the great buildings of the Roman civilisation, and mixed up columns and entablatures and pediments with but little knowledge of their real intention, and with none of their meaning, at their free will. They used them as an illiterate person in any age will use a new word to ornament the sentence of the moment quite independently of its meaning.

But as time passes knowledge increases, and it is felt and seen that the earlier method is ignorant and barbarous. Greater knowledge enables those who possess it to use the details of the style with more propriety, and the invariable law is that a day of purism succeeds that of license. And as in the one there was perfect liberty, so in the other there is constant restraint. The true laws governing the outward characteristics of the style have been discovered, and it is not permitted that they should be transgressed. It thus happened that all Classic Architecture was thought to be summed up in the celebrated Five Orders, and

with regard to these every proportion was settled and every measurement fixed, so that no deviation was possible without an outcry against broken law and violated standards. It is but a few years ago that it would have taken a very brave man indeed to have even attempted any alteration in that which was firmly fixed. These laws were so numerous and so minute, descending to such small particulars, that the Art of the architect had in it no place for any other qualities than unthinking obedience, and absolute prostration of thought and mind, of intellect, and of will, and no sin could be greater or more perverse than that of originality. It therefore happens that in the use of Exotic Art, the first stage is distinguished by barbarism and license, and the second by cold purism which forbids advance and renders progress impossible. The artist is hindered by his knowledge, his learning kills his art. He dare not invent new forms or modifications of old ones, for should he so do he renders himself liable to the reproach that he is corrupting the style. He cannot hope to develop new forms to meet new wants, or new beauties to satisfy deeper knowledge and new ideas. His art becomes yearly more lifeless, more cold, more joyless, and dead. Yet it may still be persisted in and even regarded with tolerance, and even when it has proved unbearable, and has apparently dropped into disuse and forgetfulness, the whim of some person may cause it to reappear. It seems as if we never could have done with these worn-out forms, and ideas devoid of meaning. Revivals of once or thrice dead revivals meet us at every turn.

If we want to see still more clearly the real state of this question, we have but to compare our Art with our Literature. That also has been influenced more than once by mannerisms foreign to our nature. The influence has also gone below mannerism, and has affected thought and feeling. But these exotic influences, though recurring from time to time, have been of short duration only, and our Literature has been and is living. Our authors would find few readers to-morrow if their works were in any degree parallel to our ordinary Art. We should care as little about poetry and prose, as the majority still cares about Art, if every book or essay, if every poem or novel, were but a reproduction of the forms and words and ideas that were in use centuries ago. In fact, we have life and development in Literature, in Painting, in Music; it is only in our everyday Art that we are still producing and reproducing the past works of all nations.

Is the reason discoverable? What ought we to do? Are we to try and wipe out the past and begin again? The last would

be a bold but an uncertain and, fortunately, an impossible remedy. We cannot obliterate the past if we would ; but some sort of solution we must make if we possibly can. We may perhaps find ourselves on the road to it if we only try to learn what the base of all possible Art is. Art is but a method of expression ; the only method possible or open to certain persons. Its methods are various and strange, but although it can by its own means express much that can also be expressed by other means, it also has, in proportion to its true value and true position as Art, a power of expression with regard to certain ideas or truths, which power belongs to it alone. Thus Art and Literature can express many things in common, but their peculiar value and ultimate distinction exists in the fact that certain truths or ideas cannot be expressed in any other way than by their special means. With Literature alone, the world would have lacked that revelation that Art alone can give. The converse is of course equally true. It is true also of the subdivisions of Art. The Art of the Painter has its limits. The Art of the Sculptor knows its bounds. The musician is eloquent when other arts are dumb. The soul of man is so wide and his desires so infinite that all his powers are wanted : life is imperfect as these are absent. Every possible form of expression is needed, and we cannot without great and lasting loss spare poet, or painter, or sculptor, or architect, or musician.

What is it then that the artist wants to express? It is admiration. Admiration or love—call it which we will or may. The possession of that faculty gives him the need of expression—the bent of his own genius or nature decides for him its form. The beauty and the glory of this marvellous world fills his soul so full that he must speak, and the nature of his speech depends upon his aim. In one man it takes the form of words ; in another it appears as music ; in a third, in some other form ;—but the base of all is always admiration, and its expression is some form of Art. In truth idea is as necessary to Art as soul is to man. Art without idea is altogether impossible. It is worse than a corpse ; and the folly of this use of Exotic Art is that we can but get the form of expression and miss the idea. We get the shadow only, the substance never. We like Greek art, admire it intensely, spend much time in studying it, and find it more and more entrancing the more we study it. But if we are not blind we also find this—that it is as impossible to us for our own use as the ancient Greek language. We look through the Greek Art, the beautiful expression, to the idea expressed, and find that for good or evil it does not suffice us. We cannot regulate our

lives, our thoughts, our actions by Greek idea, and therefore Greek Art, which was only one form of the expression of that idea, is equally impossible to us. Do not be angry on that account. Why should anyone want in Art that which no one wants in Literature? Yet at the present hour men want to revive Greek Art and find fault with us who tell them that it is impossible; yet they do not want Mr. Tennyson, or Mr. Swinburne, or Mr. Morris to imitate Euripides, and to use not only his words, his phraseology, and his mannerisms, but the very construction of his dramas also. Nay, what is more, the very persons who would, if they could, torture modern admiration into wearing a Greek mask, would blame any writer who should imitate Greek literature, and denounce it as intolerable affectation and worthless copyism.

The same reasoning will apply to all bygone Art, and all foreign Art of our own time. It is the expression—good, or bad, or indifferent—but still the expression only of idea. If the idea is possible to us also, if we can live by it or with it, then there may be just a chance that the forms of expression may suit us also. But if the idea is not in any way possible to us, neither can the Art, which is the form of its expression, be possible to us.

We know all this in common and ordinary life, and yet in all Art matters we are blind to the self-same truth. To take a small instance: You know the kind of bore any person is who will talk his own special newspaper. Some persons are dumb for a great part of the week, but eloquent for a time after they have read their weekly paper. We have but scant respect for those who adopt as their own other people's ideas, and still less for those who adopt other persons' words and phrases and arguments. We recognise—we know—that if any man has anything worth saying it must be his own, or made his own by his treatment of it. It is more than time that we learned the same lesson with respect to Art, and that we recognised that our only hope for the future, even if it land us in present bankruptcy, is to rely upon ourselves, and if we have anything to say, to use such words of our own as we can command. If we have nothing to say, let us for a time at least be content to be dumb. Our real hope—perhaps our only hope—for the future is that we do still possess the great faculty of admiration, and that it is increasing. The man and woman of to-day see more to admire in the universe that surrounds them than their immediate ancestors. The modern love of nature is not unreal, is not affectation, but is sincere, true, unaffected, and is spreading and widening daily. We have awoke to the fact that it is wicked and base and vile needlessly to

dishonour and desolate the country. We have found out that our rivers have nobler uses to which they can be put than being made receptacles for sewage. We have actually dared to thwart the railway engineer, and his more dangerous accomplice the director. We have determined that, ere it is too late, some part of England shall be free from the kind of curse that has turned the once lovely country between this town and Wolverhampton into a loathsome desert. If you disagree with me in this opinion, then at least renounce all hope of Art, and spare yourselves trouble that can only end in disappointment. But the truth is that this change for good is real, and lovely as England yet is, the number of those who can feel that loveliness, who can enjoy it and are thankful for it, is continually increasing.

The admiration exists, the need for its expression exists. It presses upon us more closely and lifts up its voice more plainly every day. What form that expression will ultimately take no one can say, but its coming will be marvellously helped and quickened if we resolve, even if at first we do it badly, to express that admiration in our own way, by such means as we can find out or invent, and lay aside the supreme folly of clothing our own ideas in the worn-out garments of other nations. To the musician the beauty of the world will come through music; the artist will show it upon his canvas; the architect will show it in the stone with which he has to deal, and in the bricks which he may mould into the forms in which he wills them to appear; and the sculptor, instead of his art being dead, will be able to take up our common and ordinary life, and show us not only its variety, but also its grandeur, nobility, and poetry.

I will conclude with one more quotation from Tennyson—the same poem of “Amphion”—from which we may all take pattern:—

“And I must work thro’ months of toil,  
 And years of cultivation,  
 Upon my proper patch of soil  
 To grow my own plantation.  
 I’ll take the showers as they fall,  
 I will not vex my bosom :  
 Enough if at the end of all  
 A little garden blossom.”

SHAKESPEARE    TERCENTENARY.

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OF

“OUR SHAKESPEARE CLUB,”

NOCK’S ROYAL HOTEL,

BIRMINGHAM,

*APRIL the TWENTY-SECOND, 1864.*



# Programme.

—o—

CANTATA, WITH ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENTS.

ADDRESS BY GEORGE DAWSON, ESQ., M.A.

*I N T E R V A L .*

READING OF FIRST ACT OF *THE TEMPEST*,

BY SAMUEL PHELPS, ESQ.,

WITH MUSICAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

SHAKESPEAREAN SONGS.

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind" - - - - ARNE.

Dr. INGLEBY.

"Where the bee sucks" - - - - ARNE.

Mrs. WILLIAMS.

"Thou soft flowing Avon" - - - - ARNE.

Dr. INGLEBY.

"It was a lover and his lass" - - - -

Mr. J. BERESFORD.

"Take, oh, take those lips away" - - - T. ANDERTON.

Dr. INGLEBY.

# SHAKESPEARE.

## A Cantata.

*Written and composed expressly for this occasion.*

WORDS BY MR. SEBASTIAN EVANS, M.A.

MUSIC BY MR. THOMAS ANDERTON.

—o—

### INTRODUCTORY SYMPHONY.

ANDANTE.

ALLEGRO.

RECITAL (SPOKEN WITH MUSIC).

Even as the little life within the shell  
Summer on summer wreathes an ampler cell,  
So the slow centuries roll, and human lore  
Broadens to nobler grandeur more and more,  
Upbuilding times of wiser toil and ease,  
Of warless peoples linked by wreckless seas;—  
One law, one language, one humanity  
Whom Love makes kindred, and whom truth makes free.

O, in that mightier Future, when the years  
Lie thickly mouldering on the hopes and fears  
Of living men, as now in Avalon  
The greenwood leaves of summers long ago  
On fabulous Arthur's tomb,—thou, SHAKESPEARE, then  
Shalt Thou still live within the hearts of men,  
As now,—or cold Oblivion, such as falls  
On others close o'er THEE?—

These festivals  
Themselves shall answer!—Late or soon to Death  
The Poet-peerage of Elizabeth,—  
Titans of song, with empire-girdled brow  
Yield one by one their wreaths!—An Angel THOU  
Among the Giants, art not crowned like them!  
The eternal stars are in thy diadem!—  
No mortal element mingles in the life  
Which now THOU wearest!—

Through the unending strife  
And travail of our pilgrimage, THY voice  
Is aye beside us, grieve we or rejoice;  
A portion of ourselves in loss or gain,  
In wealth or need, health, sickness, ease or pain  
From the first childhood to the last!—

I.

**The Infant.**

SOLO AND QUARTET - - MRS. WILLIAMS, MRS. LOWE,  
MESSRS. WALKER, ZAIB, AND ASTON.

'T is a mother singing  
By the cradle of her boy;  
Till the pouting and the frowning  
Melt into a smile of joy,  
And the little fretful  
Childish anger slumber in sweet dreams forgetful.—  
THINE is that old ditty  
With its sweetness and its pity,  
Like an angel skyward winging  
To the winds that weary burden of a childish sorrow  
flinging!

## II.

**The Schoolboy.**

DUET - MRS. WILLIAMS AND MR. BERESFORD.

'T is a schoolboy smiling,  
Conning o'er a pleasant task :—  
Laughing, cheerily rehearsing  
To himself the mimic Masque;  
After princely fashion  
Clenching with meet gesture words of scornful passion :  
—Look, where Falstaff meets him !  
How the satchelled boy-prince greets him !  
Both to-morrow in the meadows  
O'er the merry windrows will be chasing the cloud-shadows.

## III.

**The Lober.**

AIR - - MR. CHARLES LUNN.

"T is a pale Poet in the brookside bracken

Daydreaming of his love :—

With deep, deep sighs

Outbreathing to the west his lovelorn melancholy,

What time, forgotten of the winds, above

The o'ercanopying hazel-tangles blacken

Against the nectarine skies.—

—Ah, speak his tale!—Unseal his soul's sweet woe!

—Speak for him, speak,—Lorenzo, Romeo!—

Your words shall ease him wholly

Of all that slays in true-love's pangs and fears

In a wild fashion of delicious tears!—

## IV.

**The Soldier.**

## MARCH.

SONG - - - MR. BERESFORD.

Hark!—'T is the cannon booming!  
With a clang and a crash,  
With a darting flash  
Under the sulphurous cloud whose hail melts to blood!—  
See where the warrior stands!—  
'On to the breach!'—One moment yet  
He lingers, hilt in hand!—  
He sees, beyond the battle-mist  
His own dear Fatherland!  
Where Freedom still against the world  
Defends her island-keep:—  
The long white cliffs her castle-walls,  
Her castle-moat the Deep!—  
There dwell the dear ones of his home;—  
His friend, his true love there!—  
On, on!—The English hand can do  
All English heart can dare!—  
—Whose is that voice, heard through the battle-roar?  
"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more!  
Cry God for Harry, England and St. George!"—

## V.

**The Justice.**

SONG - - MR. W. ASTON.

A lord of many acres in an old manorial hall  
Bids cheery Christmas-welcome to his neighbours, great  
and small,  
With song and dance and rare roast beef, and brimming  
cups for all !  
—Hark, 't is with SHAKESPEARE'S grace he bids, " Fall  
to, pray God, our cheer  
May answer my goodwill, and your good welcome here !"



## VI.

**The Old Man.**

RECITATIVE - - MR. BICKLEY.

An old, old man,—a hoary sire of sires :—  
Life's stricken warrior resting on his shield,  
Aweary of all strife of soul and sense :—  
Dost THOU not word his wishes ? “ Bear me hence,  
Forth from the noise and rumour of the field,  
Where I may think the remnant of my thoughts  
In peace, and part this body and my soul  
In contemplation and devout desires.”—

## VII.

**Second Childhood.**

AIR - - MR. BICKLEY.

Leaves fall,—tides ebb,—suns set!—  
Why should he linger yet  
The Winter of his age the fresh young Springtide  
mocking?  
Ah, close the weary eye  
With a peaceful lullaby;—  
And with those sweet numbers  
That in childhood hushed his slumbers,  
Hush him gently to the cradle where his sleep shall need  
no rocking!

QUARTET AND CHORUS.

From one cradle to the other  
Thus we hail THEE all men's brother!  
Weal or woe, whate'er betide us  
With a word to cheer or guide us  
SHAKESPEARE, thou art still beside us!  
And through centuries of glory,  
To the close of man's strange story,  
Weal or woe, whate'er betide him  
Thou, with word to cheer or guide him,  
SHAKESPEARE, still shalt be beside him!—

## EXCURSIONS.

1862. Hagley.  
Cannock Chase.  
Sutton Coldfield.
1863. Knowle.  
Bromsgrove Lickey.  
Tardebigge.
1864. Lichfield.  
Worcester.
1865. Broadway.  
Wrekin and Wellington.
1866. Stafford and Colwich.
1867. Rugeley and Colwich.
1868. Stratford-on-Avon.  
Malvern and Eastnor.
1869. Banbury, Edge Hill, and Compton Wynyates.  
Bewdley, Button Oak, and Habberley Valley.
1870. Bredon and Church Stretton.
1871. Warwick, Charlecote, and Stratford.
1873. Ludlow.
1875. Haddon Hall and Chatsworth.
1879. Holt Castle, Witley Court, and Hundred House.
1882. Oxford.
1883. Ludlow and Stokesay.
1884. Compton Wynyates, Edge Hill, and Broughton  
Castle.
1885. Salisbury and Winchester.
1887. Glastonbury and Wells.
1888. Eton and Windsor.
1889. Berkley Castle, Fairford, and Cirencester.
1890. Cambridge and Ely.
1891. Lincoln and Peterborough.
1894. Bolton Abbey and Yorkshire Moors.
1897. Elan Valley Waterworks.
1899. Marlborough and Savernoake.
1900. Ross and the Wye.
1901. The Dukeries and Sherwood Forest.
1903. Kelmscott and Buscot.

PRESENT MEMBERS,

NOVEMBER, 1903.

Airy, Osmund.  
Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. Joseph.  
Collings, Rt. Hon. Jesse.  
Dixon, W. Macneile.  
Harris, William.  
Hayes, Alfred.  
Hill, Alfred.  
Holliday, James R.  
Hookham, George.  
Johnson, George J.  
Kenrick, Rt. Hon. William.  
Leith, R. F. C.  
Lloyd-Owen, D. C.  
Mason, E. F.  
Mathews, Charles Edward.  
Mathews, George S.  
Pemberton, T. Edgar.  
Pinsent, R. A.  
Saundby, Robert.  
Smith, Edwin.  
Wallis, Whitworth.  
Williams, Rt. Hon. J. Powell.  
Williams, S. D.

P A S T M E M B E R S ,

RESIGNED OR DEAD.

Adkins, H.  
Aitken, W. C.  
Anderton, Thomas.  
Bragge, William.  
Brewerton, George.  
Bunce, John Thackray.  
Bond, Francis.  
Chamberlain, John Henry.  
Chamberlain, Richard.  
Dammann, Karl.  
Dawson, George.  
Evans, Sebastian.  
Everitt, A. E.  
Harris, Benjamin.  
Haynes, Benjamin.  
Henshaw, F. H.  
Herbert, Jesse.  
Heslop, T. P.  
Hill, M. D.  
Ingleby, Clement M.  
Kenrick, G. H.  
King, Wilson.  
Martin, William.  
Osler, Alfred C.  
Pemberton, Oliver.  
Shaw, George.  
Stack, J. H.  
Timmins, Samuel.  
Tonks, Edmund.  
Turner, J. P.

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ERRATA.—Page 30, for Thackeray, read Thackray.  
Pages 46 and 86, for Savernoake, read Savernake.  
Page 46, for Rhyader, read Rhayader.  
Page 86, for Berkley, read Berkeley.  
Page 86, omit excursion to Broadway, 1865; insert  
excursion to Broadway, 1872. 1870, Bredon and  
Church Stretton, read as two excursions.



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